THE MAN OF KERIOTH

ROBERT NORWOOD

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BY

ROBERT NORWOOD

AUTHOR OF "THE MODERNISTS," "THE PIPER AND THE REED," "THE WITCH OF ENDOR," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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TO

MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER

FROM WHOM I FIRST HEARD
THE STORY OF THE CARPENTER

What laughter was within your eyes
That saw as God must see;
And by that laughter make us wise,
Dear Man of Galilee.

INTRODUCTION

Poetry is the highest vehicle of spiritual truth. Ideas depend greatly on the form used to express them. Spiritual truth is neither local nor temporary; it is universal and eternal; it is binding on earth and in heaven. Crystallised forms of logical thought, enclosed in theological terms which, in turn, are dependent on prevailing philosophical conceptions, hinder spiritual truth on its march down the ages. Much harm has been done to religion by the unnatural marriage between the poetry of Jesus and the logic of the schoolmen. To bind the spiritual, which is permanent, to a form which is passing, is to impede truth.

Poetry and Truth

The Christian religion is embarrassed today because of the alleged indissolubility of the union betwixt the Faith and the Philosophy of the Nicene Age. It has even been obscured by its blood relationship to Judaism. When the poet deals with religious truth, it travels on wings; when the philosopher unfolds it, it walks on crutches. The poet is elusive; he cannot be

Poetry and Religion

cabined or confined. The philosopher can always be found; his means of locomotion do not lend themselves to flight.

A Poet-Teacher

The historical gospels (SS. Matthew, Mark, Luke) are occupied chiefly with the life of a poet-teacher. The spiritualised gospel (S. John) gives less of history, but is richer in spiritual truth. In all the gospels, however, Jesus is the child of nature, dreaming on the hill-sides, walking by the sea, plucking the flowers, sleeping in the storm. He is poetical in the form of his teaching: his kingdom is as a mustard seed, a pearl, a net with all kinds of fishes. He is a door, a loaf, a vine; his disciples are they who enter by the door, eat the loaf, and become branches of the vine. Boldly he pushes his figures into the region of conduct: forgive till seventy times the sacred number seven, turn the other cheek, go the second mile, give your cloak with the coat. When the logic-loving philosopher receives these sayings into the hardening pot of theology, he obscures the meaning, and makes the way of performance more difficult. But the poet-reader receives the words, sees the lessons, and does not fall back upon casuistry for light. He can apply the teaching to states and individuals alike. The rigid thinker is driven into an *impasse* in conduct by the hard sayings of Jesus, and frees himself by insisting on the oriental hyper-

bole found in the words. The poet does not stumble at hyperbole; it is his native tongue. So, recognising it as a vehicle of truth, he passes beyond the form, and sees the thought intended.

The Human Jesus

It may be, therefore, that the poet's outlook can supply the demand of our time, for an estimate of the character of Jesus consistent with our ideas of great manhood, and for an interpretation of his religion, at least not irreconcilable with the assured findings of modern knowledge. The *Man of Kerioth* is an essay towards this end. Jesus of the play is very man. The Carpenter of Nazareth, whose handicraft Philip admired, is presented in a picture so winsome, so tenderly human, that it will draw men to him. The Carpenter carries himself through the marriage scene at Cana, where wine is flowing freely, with a divinely subtle aloofness from its folly, with such gentleness in reproach, that he saves the drunken Thomas from himself. Jesus comes out of the scene, sublime without any effort, and faithful to the ideal of St. John. Devout Christian sentiment is rightly suspicious of such adventures. The devout soul wonders at the scene, and understands the horror of the religionists of Jesus' time, who sought to discredit him by saying, "Behold, a man, gluttonous; a wine-bibber, the friend of publicans and sinners."

The same skill is shown in that scene where

The Great Playmate

Jesus plays with the children by the seaside. Matthew and Luke * have thought it worth while to preserve an instance of such play. We are told that Jesus watched the street children playing games. When the stage was set for a funeral, it was easy to provide a corpse and mourners, but none were ready to take the part of the professional weepers. Then a wedding was attempted. A bride and groom were selected, musicians were appointed, but none were willing to dance to the piping on such a hot day. Comparison of the scene in the play with the miracles of the Apocryphal gospels will illustrate the fidelity of the *Man of Kerioth* to the spirit of the gospel story. Apocryphal † stories of Jesus show him making clay birds fly; but when the birds are made in this play, Jesus tells the children that they must make them fly. They catch the spirit of the great Playmate, and cry, "We will, we will."

Jesus and the New Humanism

The human Jesus of the Gospel has been obscured. Our Christ has been too ghostly, and not of flesh and blood, as we are. For this reason, chaplains at the front say that Christ is unknown to many soldiers. One Scottish Chaplain ‡ has been bold to say,

* *S. Matthew, XI, 17.*

† *Cf. Longfellow's GOLDEN LEGEND.*

‡ *AS TOMMY SEES US, Arnold, London.*

"*They have never seen him; that is a fact.*" It is not true to say that Jesus is unknown; it is true to say that he has been hidden away, that he has been misunderstood. The Spirit of the Christ was incarnated in the Carpenter of Nazareth that the exceeding brightness of his glory might appear, and be known to all men. But the Christ of religious circles today is little better than a filmy ghost, without flesh and blood. The heroic Jesus of the Apocalypse has eyes as coals of fire, feet of burnished brass, and a voice like the breaking of many waters. This Christ has been lost, and the substitute offered has not been accepted. The bitter experience of the last four years has convinced the most thoughtful that a new and broad humanism alone will satisfy the religious aspirations of our age. The inspiration of this humanism will be a great and glowing God-man, living a truly human life.

A Great and Glowing God-man

Two influences have united to obscure the glory of the Christ-soul incarnated in the Carpenter of Nazareth: one, the exaggeration of the supernatural element; the other, the loss of sharp lines in the picture of the historic Jesus, in the Pauline quest after the Christ. One cannot doubt that search for the Holy Soul of Jesus was necessary for a complete Christology, and may have been rendered imperative by a cult of the Man-Jesus to

the exclusion of his spiritual significance to the universe. The fact remains that, in our cycle of human experience, men are more interested in the Christ after the flesh than in the Over-soul of Jesus. Paul's determination "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet know we him no more" is one in which our age will not share.

The Oldest Picture of Jesus

The oldest picture of Jesus is found in St. Mark's gospel; and here the miraculous element is reduced to a minimum. As we pass away from Jesus in point of time, we enter more immediately into the region of the unnatural and the unexpected. Jesus forbade the exploitation of his cures, yet the later disciples emphasised the wonder element. The intellectual development of men, with their conceptions of the spiritual and the physical world, encouraged the development of wonder and magic in ordinary life. In our time, with different ideas of the origin of the world, with the thought of law going forward majestically from cause to effect, the wonder element becomes more of a hindrance and less of a help.

Three Ways of Meeting the Problem

There are three different ways of meeting the problem presented by the wonder element as found in some miracles of the New Testament. One way denies them altogether: miracles do not happen; they have never happened, save in

the highly coloured imagination of the undeveloped and uninstructed mind. Miracles so regarded are an obstacle to the spread and progress of the gospel. The second way admits their possibility, but denies their probability. They stand or fall on the historical character of the documents which record them. Miracles are neither necessary to religion nor obstacles to truth. The third way simply passes by, with the characteristic nonchalance of the Mystic, the real or alleged miraculous element, and fixes the mind on the spiritual significance of the wonder.

Miracles

So, in the play, Blind Bartimæus walks through the country lanes of Galilee, seeing beauty and wonder, splendour and glory, with the eyes of his awakened soul. He knows a cripple who is happy in spite of his crutches, because he has overcome their spiritual handicap.

The Mystic

"He walks with greater joy on summer roads
"Than they who travel on their sandalled feet."

So also, Bartimæus has been cured of the curse of blindness, because he has risen superior to the need of eyes. Until Bartimæus met Jesus he was very blind, but

"He made me independent of two eyes,
"And taught me how to see life through the soul."

The noble company of the blind in the allied

armies will probably be the first to understand the worth of this point of view, and the value of such an interpretation. Unless the Christian Scientists are right it is all that Jesus can do for them now. The Mystic does not say that the cures of the gospel are inventions; but he does not depend on wonder-signs in the physical world, because he sees so clearly with the eyes of the soul. The Mystic knows Jesus as the Friend, very close and very dear. It is love that has led him captive, not wonder, nor power.

The Noble Company of the Blind

Christian Science

The tragedy of the play lies in the soul of the Man of Kerioth. Other writers of imaginative literature have dealt with the problem which Judas left. Modern scholars find a bias against Judas in the gospels. This was to be expected; and we must not be surprised that it deepened with time. The problem has increased in fascination and interest. Invariably a woman has been introduced into the story; but in making Mary of Magdala and the Man of Kerioth lovers the writer has broken new ground. The problem of Judas, however, has no relation to his love, nor is it related to his greed for gold. The sorrow of Judas follows too quickly on his offence to have been

The Tragedy of the Play

The Demand for a Sign

the tragedy of a villain. Nor can ambition be cited to explain his sin. The curse of Judas is the curse of material religion. In his religious frenzy, he is blind to the real significance of things. He would make Jesus a ruler and divider over Israel—a rôle which Jesus had rejected often. The lure of Judas was a demand for a sign. It became a fixed idea; like the monotonous cry of the insane, the words of Judas ring through the play, "A sign, a sign."

It is wicked and adulterous to ask for a sign as the condition of faith. Many signs *follow* belief, but never precede it. The signs of the happy cripple and the blind minstrel were significant—but not to the Man of Kerioth.

The Price of the Potter's Field

The eager soul of Judas was wrecked on the rock of the material in religion—dependence on the visible, on physical wonder, external authority, on signs of earth and heaven. This is the price of the Potter's Field; and the Church clumsily clinging to signs has travelled for too many ages on the way of the Man of Kerioth.

Robert Johnston.

Church of the Saviour,
Philadelphia.

THE MAN OF KERIOTH

CHARACTERS

JUDAS, of Kerioth.
CAIAPHAS, High Priest.
PHILIP, of Bethsaida.
YOUNG MEN, friends of Judas and Philip.

WINE VENDOR,
PRIEST,
LEVITE,
PHARISEE,
SCRIBE,
BREAD VENDOR,
VOICE OF JOHN BAPTIST,
SOLDIER,
LEPER,
} Near Bethabara.

LEVI, a Publican.
OBED, the Bridegroom of Cana.
BARTIMÆUS, a Blind Minstrel.

THE MASTER OF THE FEAST,
RABBI,
ELDER,
GUESTS,
REVELLERS,
SERVANTS,
} At the Wedding Feast.

JESUS, the Carpenter.
THOMAS, a Wine Bibber.

SIMON,
ANDREW,
JAMES,
JOHN,
} Fishermen of Capernaum.

NATHANIEL, one of the Disciples.
A LAME MAN.
SIMON'S BOY.
MARY, of Magdala.
ERINNA, a Greek Maid.
MARY, the Mother of Jesus.
ADA, the Bride of Cana.
MAIDENS.
A WOMAN.
A LITTLE GIRL.

Children, Vendors, Men, Women, Sailors, Camel Drivers, Muleteers, Soldiers, Servants, Priests, Pharisees, Scribes.

SCENES

ACT I

A roof garden of Mary Magdalene's house at Jerusalem.

ACT II

Near Bethabara, at the River Jordan. One week later.

ACT III

The Wedding Feast of Cana. Two weeks later.

ACT IV

Lake Shore near Capernaum. Six months later.

ACT V

Before the Garden of Gethsemane. Two years later.

THE MAN OF KERIOTH

ACT I

SCENE.—*A roof garden of Mary Magdalene's house at Jerusalem.*

In the background a vista of the Temple with a tower of Pilate's palace against an expanse of blue sky. On the right a massive vine-clustered wall with an arched entrance. A great palm tree lifts its head over the left battlement of the roof. Huge jars of oleander, tamarisk and fern are grouped about a central fountain forming a marble square; a deep niche in the front of the fountain is strewn with silken pillows of many colours. The garden is roofed from the glare of the sun by a trellis of grape-vines.

A company of Maidens in white robes cinctured with golden girdles enter. They dance to the accompaniment of harps, dulcimers and cymbals, moving by graceful degrees down to the fountain. A Greek maid, Erinna, begins a song whose refrain is caught by the others. As the song ends, Mary appears with Judas, Caiaphas, Philip and a number of young men.

ERINNA [*singing*].

Now is the time of the blossoming—
O little green buds unfold!
Soft on the mouth with a kiss comes Spring—
A lover is he and bold!

Now is the time for a heart to tell—
O little white wings unfold!
The word that my lady liketh well—
What lover would not be bold?

CAIAPHAS. Well sung, Erinna!

PHILIP [*to Caiaphas*].

Better than the Levites.

MARY [*to Caiaphas, as they move down to the fountain*].

Why let your bearded minstrels bawl, my Priest,
When there are maidens?

CAIAPHAS [*leading Mary to the seat*].

Would you have my ephod?

MARY [*nestling among the pillows*].

I am not emulous of ephods, Priest.

PHILIP She has no need of bells above her feet,
Whose footfall is a raindrop on the grass.

MARY [*lightly to Philip*].

O foolish Philip!

[*Erinna and the maidens with the young men are gathered near the palm at left. Caiaphas stands at the right of Mary; Philip leans on the ledge of the fountain, at her feet; Judas*

stands behind the fountain looking out to the Temple.]

PHILIP. There is place for folly.

JUDAS [*turning and approaching the group*].

Ay, in Gehenna where the pit is deep,
And where the unquenched flame is hot for fools!

CAIAPHAS [*a hand on the right shoulder of Judas*].

Well said, O thunderer! Now, Philip, now?

PHILIP. You smell of altar smoke and incense fumes,
And Judas is a butcher!

MARY. Philip, peace!

JUDAS [*Smiling on the Philip*].

He who kills time with laughter may not call——

PHILIP. Nay, Judas, it is I whom time would slay;
For every moment is an arrow shot
Swift from his bow, and I am pierced to heart
By many moments—wanting Mary's mouth!

MARY [*throwing a lotus, plucked from the fountain, at Philip*].

O idler with fair words, take up your harp;
For when you make not music you are dull.

PHILIP. Must I stand lonely, twanging on a harp?

MARY. Yea, that you must.

PHILIP And what shall be my song?

MARY. Sing me of love.

JUDAS. Not so, my yellow head;
Give us a noble chant of chariots,
Measured by hiss of arrows like the rain.

PHILIP. Ho, there! Erinna, fetch me Sappho's harp,
That I may steal a moment of her soul
And hold these Hebrews helpless with a song.
[*Erinna leaves the group at left and yields her harp to Philip; his fingers stray among the strings until they find a mighty chord.*]
My song shall be of hearts whom love has hurt—
Of hearts that call through thundering of shields:

O Love, thou art like grapes crushed for the wine,
And the corn that is bruised on the floor;
A hook through the tendrils of the young vine:
Like a bolt and a bar on a door
That will open to me nevermore!

Thunder of shields,
Lightning of spears,
Rain of the arrows,
Hail of the stones
Hurled from the sling,
When the foeman appears;
Better to die
In the valley of bones,

Than to live without love
On the mountain of tears!

O Love, thou art paths that are lost in the sand
To the sound of a caravan bell;
The pallor of cheeks at the touch of a hand
And a sigh and a kiss at the well;
Like a rain of wild flowers in Hell!

ERINNA [*standing near*].
Nay, Philip!
PHILIP. What! Know you a better song?
ERINNA. That was not Sappho.
MARY [*to Erinna*].
Out on you, dear Greek!
ERINNA. Why, Mary?
MARY. Judith is the word.
CAIAPHAS. Well said!
ERINNA. In the wild heart of Judith there was hate,
In Sappho's only love!
[*She returns to the group at left.*]
JUDAS. Hate for the crime
Of Holofernes; hate for every wrong
Done to her people whom she held so dear,
That she was well nigh wedded unto hate
To set them free.
CAIAPHAS. Oh, for another Judith!
JUDAS. Is she not here?
CAIAPHAS. Mary?

JUDAS. As great of heart.
MARY. Yea, I would measure any with my love.
PHILIP [*with a pretense of marking a beam*].
The cord is on the beam—mark now with mine.
MARY [*rising to meet Philip*].
My love against your love?
PHILIP. Lay cord to cord
Upon the beam.
MARY [*measuring as with a cord.*]
Why, Philip, here are lengths
Of cord beyond the beam! So is man's love
Determined by the common length of life,
While woman's love is measured to the stars.
A YOUNG MAN. Now is your cord noosed tight about your throat,
Philip, another twist and you are done!
A YOUNG MAN. Mary, his time for hanging has not come.
PHILIP [*to the young men*].
Peace, boys!
YOUNG MEN. O yellow head!
PHILIP. Hence to your mothers—
Erinna, sing these babies back to home!
MAIDENS [*mocking Philip with the young men*].
La, la, la!
PHILIP. Erinna, sing!
ERINNA [*over her shoulder*].
Sappho's way?
JUDAS. Why waste we time to twittering of harps,

When Roman feet tread all our people down
Like grapes within a wine-vat?

PHILIP. Laugh with us.

JUDAS. Laughter and I are friends no more!

PHILIP. No more—
And in a garden?

JUDAS. 'Tis a place to weep!

MARY. Not in my garden.

JUDAS. Here as in all gardens.

MARY [*proudly*].
I will not have it so.
[*Returns to the seat.*]

JUDAS. While there is Rome
There must be tears.

PHILIP. But not in Mary's garden.
Say that I speak the truth, O Caiaphas.

CAIAPHAS. Now by the Temple, Philip, you are right;
For here are forces that will wrest from Rome
Her power to hurt the world. Rome! How that name
Knells all our pride, our faith in Him who sits
High on the circle of the turning stars!
Has He forgotten us? Is there no voice
Out of these many sounds to speak that word
Which shall call hither from the ends of earth
The seed of Abraham? Yea, I am one
Who is not shaken by the wind of doubt
That God hath ceased to care for Israel.
He waits for men who are within His hands

Like arrows ready for the bending bow—
Think you that He is never touched by hate?
Why then Gehenna for His enemies?
By all the torment of the ever-damned!
He serves God most who feeds eternal hate
Within his heart; therefore I pledge you this:
Hate in all hearts against the Scarlet Whore
Of Babylon!

YOUNG MEN [*with a shout*].
A Caiaphas!

JUDAS. Oh, said!
We will not cease to hate until her brow
Has made a furrow in the dust, so deep
That from the soil made moist by many tears
Shed from her sorrow and her shame, a tree
From Jesse's root shall grow and spread its branches
Over the earth.

PHILIP. Is it enough to hate?
Where is your army? Or will you seduce
With wooing words and odorous oils and balms
Yonder fair lady—Queen of Babylon?

MARY [*nestling among the pillows.*]
Now, Philip, are you musical.

YOUNG MEN [*with lifted hands.*]
Philip!

JUDAS. We will make war.

PHILIP. So, on a day, the dove
Cooed to the hawk.

JUDAS. But there are men in thousands.

PHILIP. As there are fishes in the sea, or stones
Along the shore.
CAIAPHAS. Fishes are caught with nets,
And stones are gathered by the hand.
PHILIP. The net—
Show me the net.
CAIAPHAS. Four strands but make a mesh,
Yet from one mesh the knots are multiplied
Until the fisher casts and there are fish.
PHILIP. You, Caiaphas, are in the mood for riddles.
CAIAPHAS. I learn the play of words from you. We four
Are twined together by an oath——
MARY. The Mesh!
CAIAPHAS. Are we not bound by such a love for land,
Kindred and tongue that we are as a mesh
Among the many in a fisher's net?
PHILIP. Ay, that we are.
CAIAPHAS. God is the fisherman—
Let Israel together be His net.
PHILIP. It takes a weary time to weave a net.
CAIAPHAS. Not when the many weavers are as one.
MARY. Oh, that we were as one!
PHILIP. And we are not—
They play at dream, Mary, they play at dream.
MARY. Judas and Caiaphas?

PHILIP. Like children, they,
Pretending this, pretending that, the while
Rome feeds her children on the fat of Judah.
CAIAPHAS. Not so: the city is awake at sound
Of one whose cry is that of Debora.'
MARY. Your voice?
PHILIP. Guess at the man of Kerioth.
MARY [*looking at Judas*].
'Tis never louder than a sigh.
CAIAPHAS. A voice
Speaks at the Jordan.
MARY. John?
CAIAPHAS. So you have said.
PHILIP. The hairy man of Carmel come again?
Boom! Boom! Bang!—there is a prophet for you!
JUDAS. You should see how the people follow him.
CAIAPHAS. They come from out all Jewry unto him.
JUDAS. And eager for his word.
CAIAPHAS. They bend to him,
As reeds before the wind.
PHILIP [*laughing*].
A gusty wind.
JUDAS [*angrily*].
Mocker!
PHILIP. A wind among the reeds!
JUDAS. A prophet!
PHILIP. Hail to the captain and his host of reeds!
Tremble, Tiberias!

CAIAPHAS. Yet he who moves
Men by the power of his passioned word
Can split a throne asunder with that sound.
MARY. What is a prophet?
PHILIP. Wind among the reeds!
YOUNG MEN [*with laughter*].
A merry Philip!
JUDAS. One within whose heart
All music sings and love is found complete;
Who measures in himself the utter man;
Who is more gentle than a baby's mouth
Upon its mother's breast, and yet can show
The hardness and the edge of scimiters
Against oppression: such a man is John.
MARY [*with scorn*].
You talk like his disciple.
JUDAS. No; I wait
Messias!
MARY. Why wait?
JUDAS. John announces him.
MARY. And so deceives you, while the hand of Rome
Gathers more grapes from Judah's vineyard.
PHILIP. Reeds
For fighters and a wind to captain them!
JUDAS. Messias is to come, and when he comes
Rome will be as the dust behind his feet.
CAIAPHAS. It is thus written in the Oracles.
MARY. Lean not so hard on parchment prophecies,

But find the Oracle within your hearts.
Now is the time for living men to rise
And shake a banner over all the world.

YOUNG MEN. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah—hail!

JUDAS. This will Messias do.

MARY. Then be Messias!

PHILIP. Judas Iscariot, you have been named
By true prophetic lips. Faith! if God speak
To men, how better than with Mary's mouth?
If so, then I am now for prophecy.

JUDAS [*starting back*].
You would name me Messias?

MARY. I have said.

CAIAPHAS. If you despise the Oracles of God,
How can you win the people who are bound
By adoration of a holy book?

MARY. Give them a man—they will forget the book.

CAIAPHAS. John's way is best. He quotes the Oracles.
The people understand and follow him.

MARY. Do you believe those ancient rolls of words?

CAIAPHAS. Is not a people's life within the past?

MARY. Only when they are idle or afraid,
As now; give them the living Oracle.

JUDAS [*drawing near*].
Mary, you waste our time with many words.
Can you not see that our redemption comes

Only through God's eternal Man whom John
Now prophesies?

MARY [*starting in anger from the seat*].
Beelzebub torment
You with his flies! See Caiaphas the priest
Match his blue ephod with a coat of hair,
And Judas make obeisance to a voice!
I say 'tis not in pious posturings
With ragged beggars at a river's brim,
That Judah's freedom will be won from Rome;
But by the presence of a mighty man
At head of armies like a cedar grove
In thousands through the vale of Lebanon.
How Rome would laugh to see your conqueror
Armoured with camel's hair before a host
Of lean and leprous beggars!

PHILIP. And the blind—
Do not forget the blind! What arrow-shafts
Shot from their bows would lay the legions down,
Like barley underneath the sickles! Oh,
A sight to greet Leonidas!

MARY [*stamping her foot*].
And this
From Caiaphas—the priest who dreamed
Of lifting ancient Zion to the sun!

CAIAPHAS [*passionately*].
Lifting her higher than the sun—beyond
The utmost star within the firmament!
[*With uplifted hand.*]

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning!

YOUNG MEN AND MAIDENS. Zion!

MARY [*to Caiaphas*].
Then by your hand that supplicates the sky,
Be quit of prophets.

JUDAS. John is not a man
To be forgotten.

MARY. Not while many words
Keep him remembered; let him pass away
In silence lest his presence make you mad.
You call him prophet? Well, and what of that!
Are you all slaves to offices and names?
Forget these titles that were framed of old,
And be yourselves their true significance—
Prophet? a mouther of rude, roaring cries
That give expression unto sickly thoughts!
For there you have the prophet: One who bawls
What common men have thought—the potentate
Of parables that are the ghosts of words
Long dead and waiting for a burial.
Judas, I would have you create new names,
New meanings, thoughts, dreams, aspirations, hopes,
And so lead men out of their slavery—
Their cringing to the yoke tradition binds
On coward-necks—to such a place and time
Where altars, oracles, and covenants——

CAIAPHAS [*in righteous reproach*].
You blaspheme, Mary!
MARY [*tensely*].
Priest, I only pray!
CAIAPHAS. There must be temples.
MARY. That there may be priests?
CAIAPHAS. How otherwise would sinful man know God?
MARY [*with rapture, as she looks out on the sky and the city*].
Even as the birds build nests and hatch their young;
As every flower is faithful to the field;
As every spring knows its appointed time.
JUDAS. You beckon back to groves of Bel and Molech!
PHILIP. Give me dear Aphrodite with the song
Of young Apollo to the golden lyre.
MARY. Not Syria's dark, templed tyranny,
Karnak, nor Capitol, nor Parthenon—
That shut men from the gladness of the sky—
Does Mary bid you build; for she would break
All prison doors.
CAIAPHAS. You laugh at holy things!
MARY. Where laughter dies there is no holiness.
JUDAS. Nor shall we laugh until Messias come.
MARY. He waits until you laugh.
JUDAS. First must be tears.
CAIAPHAS. In sorrow for our sins.

MARY [*approaching Caiaphas*].
One sin alone
Must be repented.
CAIAPHAS. That?
MARY. Unfaithfulness.
CAIAPHAS. Wherein were we unfaithful?
MARY. In your altar.
CAIAPHAS. The smoke of sacrifice has never ceased,
Nor have we faltered in our penitence,
These many years.
MARY. And so were you unfaithful—
How God has waited for a man to come,
Telling the world that fears Him of His love!
JUDAS. Such is Messias.
CAIAPHAS. How can there be love,
Until God's enemies are dead?
MARY. Can God
Have enemies?
JUDAS. Oh, when Messias comes,
He comes triumphant on a blood-red horse,
Lifting a banner; at his mighty voice
The earth shall tremble and the mountains fall,
The sea roll back and pour into the void
That bounds the world; the deserts shall become
Great gardens of white lilies for his feet,
The rivers flow with oil to his anointing!
John cried: "Make straight the crooked paths for him!"

Oh, I would be the maker of those paths;
The herald of his presence with a sword;
The smiter for Messias on my shield,
Waking the world from slumber at my call:
"Now is the kingdom that was promised near!"

CAIAPHAS. Spoken, my Maccabeus!

YOUNG MEN. Maccabeus!

PHILIP. Ranted like any John in camel-skin!

MARY. Like any scribe, loving long words that make
A double meaning!

JUDAS. Come with me to John.

MARY. Nay, Judas.

JUDAS. Come and you will find a king.

MARY. Of lame and leprous men?

JUDAS. A king of words,
Throned on the highest thought where he beholds
The future in the waking dream of God;
To whom the moments are as numbered leaves
Growing forever from the tree of life.
Look on his face, and you will see a man
Above all other men, so far beyond
The love of self, it seems the infinite
Shines through his eyes and overflows with words
Upon his tongue. Could God come down to earth
And tabernacle in the form of flesh,

Blinding His glory with a mortal veil,
John's body would suffice; for God must choose
The highest human for His highest love.

MARY. So you have seen Messias in John's face?

JUDAS. Therefore I wait for John to show me him.

MARY. A man is measured by the thing he sees.

JUDAS. You mean?

MARY. We are no higher than our thought.

JUDAS. A mist is on your words.

MARY. Now comes the sun
To melt the mist away: if you have seen
Messias, who is also called the Christ,
Mirrored a moment on your prophet's face,
The image of the true is in yourself.

JUDAS. Mary!

MARY. Look in your soul and find him there!

CAIAPHAS. Ah! you have touched a truth that we must keep
Forever in the mind.

JUDAS. What do you mean?

CAIAPHAS. Christ or Messias is a mystic word
Which has no meaning, save a hope, a dream,
Purpose and prayer within a nation's mind,
That slowly shapes the growing character
Until within the womb of such a race
Divine men are conceived and come to birth.

JUDAS [*excited*].
Too vague! Too vague! Messias is the man
Who comes of David's line to David's throne;
A warrior like David who will tread

The wine-press of his fury and his wrath;
A lord of battles who will seize the sun
And lift it like a torch above his head,
Calling the stars together like a host
Of levelled spears, the mountains like a throng
Of horsemen riding in their great array!
From boyhood I have dreamed this dream of Christ;
Have mused on him all day among the fields;
Have waited for the moment that is near.

MARY. I think you rave.

PHILIP. Give him a cup of wine—
Or shall I sing?

ERINNA [*drawing near to Philip*].
Already is the moon
Waiting until the sun withdraws from day,
To keep her tryst among the clustered vines
With lovers underneath the night, and we
Grow weary of these words; so, Philip, sing.

PHILIP. It is not easy, maid, to be a Greek
In Palestine.

ERINNA. The Muse of song is Joy.

PHILIP. Come, comrades, let us leave this place.
I need
Much laughter to accept the world.

ERINNA. Philip,
Harp us for dancing down to meet the moon.

YOUNG MEN AND MAIDENS [*following Erinna*].
Oh, harp for us!

PHILIP. Mary, will you not come?

MARY. I wait to talk with Judas.

PHILIP. Come with us.
Judas is drunk with tears.

MARY. Go you; I stay.
[*The trumpets of the temple blow.*]
Priest, get you to your prayers.
[*She reclines on the seat.*]

CAIAPHAS. We meet, my friends,
One week from Sabbath near Bethabara.
[*He goes out at right.*]

PHILIP. Ay, John will prove a pastime—let us go.

JUDAS. Cease, Philip, from your idle mockery.

PHILIP. Some must make merry, or the world would be
Sodden with tears. Ho, hand in hand together!
I meet you, Mary, near Bethabara.
[*Philip strikes a chord on the harp—at its sound the young men and maidens clasp hands and begin to dance about the fountain; he plays to their movement, then sings.*]

Ho for a kiss or a golden crown!
Which would you have, my lover?
Give me a maid when the sun goes down,
With the stars and moon above her;
Give me her mouth, you may keep your crown—
Be it gold, or be it myrtle:
For I know a lass beyond the town,
Clad in a crimson kirtle!

[*With a final chord of joy, Philip and the others pass through the arch.*]

MARY [*to Judas who has been pacing to and fro during Philip's song*].

I would that you had some of Philip's joy.

JUDAS [*going slowly towards Mary who makes room for him on the seat*].

How can I laugh, with sorrow everywhere?

MARY. What! Sorrow everywhere?

JUDAS. A flood of tears
Billows against the very mountain peaks,
And no one builds an ark to ride that sea.

MARY. Then let us build an ark.

JUDAS. We are too weak.

MARY. Find strength in love.

JUDAS [*tenderly*].

Our love?

MARY [*clapping her hands*].

You are awake—
How you have slumbered, Judas, through this day!

JUDAS. Evening and you and I together make
Me for awhile forgetful.

MARY. It is well;
For you have been too long remote from me,
And I have wondered often in the night:
Has Judas ceased to love me?—Ah, my dear!
That was not ever Mary's way with men,
Who held them in the hollow of her hand,
Making them sigh to shadows for a kiss.

Until you came upon me, as the spring
Comes to the earth weary of winter days,
Laughter and love were frozen in my heart;
And I was reckless of the joy I slew,
Though women cursed and called me harlot, raved
Wildly from door to door and whispered words
Behind their hands in hatred of my name.

JUDAS [*smiling and taking Mary's hands*].
Women are envious, my Magdalene,
Knowing you are more beautiful than they.

MARY. They call me sorceress.

JUDAS [*mocking*].
Unkind! Unkind!

MARY. You laugh at me?

JUDAS. Dear one, a moment past
I was rebuked for tears.
[*He draws her to him.*]

MARY [*her head on his breast*].
Judas, my love!

JUDAS. Always your love.

MARY. Beyond all other love?

JUDAS. More than my adoration of this land;
More than my hatred of the men who plough
Earth with us!

MARY. Yet you still delay the time
Of our espousal.

JUDAS. Only till Christ comes.

MARY [*freeing herself from his embrace*].
That word is like a torch to kindle flame

Of anger in my heart!

JUDAS. What sudden wind
Blackens my crystal fountain of delight?

MARY. The name—the name—I hate it!

JUDAS. Hate a name?

MARY. As you hate Rome.

JUDAS [*in high exultance*].
Who bears that name will go
From strength to strength until Tiberius
Creeps like a dog behind his chariot.

MARY. Then take that name and I will hold it up,
Like any festal goblet, to the world,
Pledging the Man of Kerioth; or else
I dash it to the ground and with my heel
Grind each frail fragment into common dust—
I will not have you fettered with a lie!
[*Starts in anger to her feet; Judas rises and takes her hand.*]

JUDAS. Mary, you are like other women in your love—
Blinded because of its white radiance.
Can you not see that I am not the man
To do this thing?

MARY. Love makes of every man
A Christ to women.

JUDAS. Yea, and love gives men
The hunger that Christ only satisfies.
Come, sit with me and let me tell a tale
No other ears have heard.
[*He leads Mary back to the seat.*]

MARY [*leaning against his shoulder*].
A tale of love?

JUDAS. A love like that which only angels know.

MARY [*smiling up at him*].
There, you are wrong, for we are mortal flesh.

JUDAS. Not ours, O Heart!

MARY [*petulantly*].
Deafness descends on me.

JUDAS. From boyhood I have dreamed a dream
of Christ.

MARY [*sullenly*].
And still you dream.

JUDAS. It came first unto me
In Nazareth.

MARY. Oh, read the proverb well:
"Can any good come out of Nazareth?"

JUDAS. One day I travelled down from Kerioth
And came to Nazareth.

MARY [*indifferently*].
And there you slept?

JUDAS. Apart from my good father's company,
I rode in joy of idling on the road
That whispered to the hedges of the day
When Saul drove back the broken Philistines,
Or, when young David brought Goliath's head,
Triumphant to Jerusalem. Each mile
Was hallowed by the feet of holy men
Who lived on earth and proved that heaven is
near.
So, dreaming, I looked up, and lo! a lad

Like to myself in years, but very tall
And comely, called across a barley field:
"David and Jonathan once walked this way."
Halting my horse, I answered swift to him:
"Hail, Daniel! Thou hast read aright my dream."
And he: "Nay, there was that upon your face
Which told the secret; and I also dream."
"Then is the love of those immortal friends
Blended again in us," I cried; "for he
Who reads my heart already has my heart!"
"Have I your heart?" he challenged. "Yea, you have,"
I answered, leaping from my horse to meet
His hand across the hedge of blossomed thorn.

MARY [*interested*].

How very sudden is the way of youth!

JUDAS. Yea, like our love when first I looked on you!

MARY. Now you have made me glad.

JUDAS. Like you the tale?

MARY [*nestling against his shoulder*].

Oh, I am greedy of each little word
That tells of you!—Say on; I like the lad.

JUDAS. Him you shall see one day.

MARY. Where does he live?

JUDAS. Capernaum.

MARY. 'Tis near Bethabara?

JUDAS. Come with us to the river, and then meet
My Carpenter.

MARY [*with changed voice*].

Oh, I had thought of him
As one aloof and fingering a sword
Until you called him bravely to your side!

JUDAS. His tongue is like a sword.

MARY [*impatiently*].

Another John!

JUDAS. There is no thunder in his voice, whose word
Cuts to the marrow of what men dispute.

MARY. The day of dull-eyed teachers is at end—
The world needs men.—So back and be a boy
Along the thorn-hedged road to Nazareth.

JUDAS. That day we talked of many things, and since
Have talked: How from the chosen seed must spring
The world's Man who will walk at ease with God,
Revealing Him who sits upon the stars
And makes of earth a footstool; how the day
Of Eden will return, and every man
Sit under his own fig tree in the light
That never darkens; how the graves will give
Back their dead; how the noise of war will cease,
And with the sighing of the sorrowful
All things shall pass that wet the world with tears.

MARY [*caught by the vision, clasps her hands upon her knees and looks away from Judas*].
Judas, I would go now to find our garden.
JUDAS. First must Christ come.
MARY. We'll find him in a garden.
JUDAS. You mean——
MARY. The garden of all lovers; there
Only can Christ be found: for now I see
That Christ is love—the living flame of love
Kindled by comrade-souls who meet on earth,
Remember in the meeting of their eyes
That moment called eternity, ere time
Drew them asunder from the bliss of heaven
And hurled them down the gulf of aching days.
Oh, time is the arch enemy of God—
The serpent who wiles woman from her joy,
Fills earth for man with thistles and with thorns!
Time is the cross on which dear love is nailed,
And love is Christ who from that lifted cross
Whispers to lovers: "Patience! We prevail."
JUDAS. Christ is God's Man, and, by the word of John
His coming is at hand.
MARY [*dreamily*].
I hear the birds
Twitter at twilight, calling from a garden.
JUDAS. And I hear laughter shaking round the world—
Ransomed by our high Captain of the host.

MARY [*with outspread hands*].
O red and yellow blossoms! O green globes
Of little grapes that cluster on a wall!
JUDAS. I'll be the trumpet of the Lord, to blow
Hither the thrice ten thousand spears of Dan,
Ephraim and Manasseh, with the bows
Of Benjamin, from every part of earth
Where the Dispersion are; and they will come
To Armageddon like a storm of sand!
MARY [*rising and walking down to front with open arms*].
O magic of white marble, where our home
Stands in a garden!
JUDAS [*following her*].
Mary, tempt me not!
MARY [*turning and clasping Judas*].
And we will make an arbour out of vines
Trained from the roots to shelter from the sun!
JUDAS. Not till Messias comes!
MARY. There will be children!
JUDAS. God, keep me to my vision!
MARY [*starting back in anger*].
You forswear
Our love?
JUDAS. Now in the holy name of Christ,
I pledge myself to such a love of you,
That all the music of wild, mating birds;
The harping of the wind among the trees;
The sound of water singing to the shore;
The timbrels and the dulcimers of dawn,

And echoing of laughter over fields—
What time the reapers gather up the corn;
Shall fail the joy of our betrothal song,
When Christ, the Bridegroom, gathers to the feast
The lovers who have tarried for his day.
[*He kneels at Mary's feet.*]

MARY [*looking down at him in tears*].
I am a woman—love me—that is Christ!

ACT II

SCENE.—*Near Bethabara at the River Jordan. One week later.*

At rear are mountain ranges. Above one jagged, wild peak hangs the red disk of the setting sun. Terraces of splintered rock descend to the Jordan—winding among deep gorges to a ford where the tall bulrushes are visible.

At left rear is a group of men and women, indistinct and far.

Red and yellow granite boulders occupy the spaces at right and left.

A plain with here and there a palm tree, along which people come and go, fills the foreground.

At front centre a granite boulder stands under a sycamore tree.

A Priest, a Levite, a Pharisee are gathered near the rock in earnest conversation. Breaking in upon their speech are heard the cries of the Vendors calling their wares of dates, figs, wine, bread, carob-pods and honey.

At intervals the voice of John, rising

above the murmur of the crowd, and thinned by distance, is clearly audible like an echo.

WINE VENDOR [*singing*].

Wine for priests and masters
In a stoppered jar—
Drink, ye turbaned fasters,
From the dewy jar—
Drink and find forgetting
Of things as they are!

Though the sun be setting,
Twinkle soon, O star!
And until to-morrow,
Ye may travel far
From your constant sorrow
With wine from a jar.

OTHERS. Ho, ye hungry!
Ho, ye hungry!
Carobs! Carobs!
Dates and figs!
Bread and honey.

VOICE OF JOHN. The Kingdom is at hand!

A PRIEST. Beelzebub's?

A LEVITE. Well said! for yonder is a swarm of flies.

[*Levi, a publican, approaches from the crowd.*]

LEVI. 'Ware lest they sting you, Priest!

PRIEST. Lend me your hide—
Nothing is thicker than a publican's!

LEVITE. Ha! ha! ho! ho!
LEVI. You laugh in antiphon,
And like a Levite to your master's wit.
BREAD VENDOR. Bread, my masters, won't you buy?
Life is in each golden crust;
Eat, and you will never die,
Fast, and lo, 'tis dust to dust!

PHARISEE. What ribald, Gentile blasphemy is this?
LEVI. The priest and levite laughing, Pharisee?
PHARISEE. The singer and his song.
PRIEST. He mocks the fast!
SCRIBE. All Israel goes whoring after noise—
God curse Tiberius!
LEVI. Gently, young Scribe,
The lightest whisper of our little world
Breathes in the ear of Cæsar; you may find
Your tongue the shorter for that spoken word.
SCRIBE. I take no measure of a Publican.
LEVI. So long you Scribes have tailored to the Law,
You have no skill to make another's coat.
PRIEST. He has no heart to fit unblemished fleece
Upon a wolf!
LEVITE. Oh, said, my master, said!
PHARISEE [*loftily*]. [wolves
Yea, such are Publicans — wolves — hungry
Clad like the guileless sheep for tearing them.

LEVI. And what are Pharisees?
VENDOR. Dry carob pods!
LEVI [*to the Vendor*].
Hither and take a shekel for that word—
Levite, why don't you laugh?—Dry carob pods!
VOICE OF JOHN. Repent!
PRIEST. That is the word—only the blood
Of sacrifice on altars can appease
The wrath of God against our common sin.
PHARISEE. And fasts—do not forget the fasts—how else
Can we be purified except by fasts
And payment of all tithes?
SCRIBE. Learning the Law
Must company the fast and sacrifice—
Ay, to the very tittle and the jot.
PRIEST. A river wide as Jordan, and of blood
Shall pour down from the Temple for our sins.
PHARISEE. And we will make more of our fasts and tithes.
SCRIBE. And every child from Beersheba to Dan
Shall count the jots and tittles of the Law.
PRIEST. Then would Messias come!
PHARISEE. How can he come
When brawlers like the Baptist make a noise
At which the people gape and nod and dance?
SCRIBE. Hale him to Herod!
LEVI. Zealous Scribe!

SCRIBE. Worldling!

LEVI. The world is all I have.

SCRIBE. There is another.

LEVI. Where?

SCRIBE. Tophet.

LEVI. When do you return to it?

A WOMAN [*approaching from left*].
Sirs, where is John?

LEVI. Yonder.

PHARISEE [*covering his face with his cloak*].
Hence, harlot, hence!

WOMAN. Flint-hearted Pharisee!

PHARISEE. Hence, hence, I say!

PRIEST. Daughter of shame!

SCRIBE. Polluter of the air!

WOMAN [*stamping her foot*].
God send a famine to rid all the world
Of such as you, Scribe, Priest and Pharisee!

LEVI [*lightly*].
And yet would we be left——

WOMAN [*with meaning*].
To laugh and love?

LEVI. You lay love on a shelf of merchandise,
While laughter is a sound of beaten gongs.

WOMAN. Since men are pleased to set a price on love,
To cheapen laughter with a cup of wine,
Must women go to market.

LEVI. Whence came you?

WOMAN. Out of a woman's cradle.
PHARISEE. Cursed the hand
That rocked it!
WOMAN. Do you curse your mother's hand?
PHARISEE. Now by the pillars of the Porch, may you
Burn in Gehenna for this blasphemy!
WOMAN. All mothers meet in Eve.
PRIEST. From Eve all sin
Flows forth on man—harlot, you are accursed!
SCRIBE [*intoning*].
"In sin my mother hath conceivèd me."—
So saith the Psalmist.
WOMAN [*passionately*].
Take me to a man
Who has not whispered in his heart that lie,
And I will be the prophet to declare
Before the world—Messias is at hand!
PRIEST. He will consume the like of you as chaff!
SCRIBE. So reads the word of Prophet Malachi.
WOMAN [*to Scribe*].
Peace, horn of ink!
SCRIBE. By Aaron's rod—
WOMAN. A pen?
LEVI [*laughing*].
God's arm! and longer than a weaver's beam—
Mate to Goliath's——
WOMAN. Threatening the world
Until a David meet it with a stone.

LEVI. And so Goliath is a scribe who holds
Men in forever awe before his pen—
A shield the written word?

WOMAN. Shatter the shield,
And rid men of Goliath, with a stone!

VOICE OF JOHN. Out of a stone God can create a Son!

WOMAN. O hear what John saith! I would go to him.

SCRIBE. Go, harlot! You will find your sisters there.

PRIEST. Flow into yonder pool where all the filth
Gathers for John.

PHARISEE. Yea, go and be baptised
With publicans and sinners.

SCRIBE. What a bath
For cleansing souls!

LEVI [*taking the woman by the hand*].
Come.

WOMAN [*looking up into his face*].
What! you take my hand?

LEVI. Mine is as soiled.

WOMAN. Though these have taunted me?

LEVI. Therefore I take your hand.

WOMAN. I am a harlot.

LEVI. And I God's fool!

PHARISEE [*with a gesture of contempt*].
You are defiled of her.

LEVI [*to the Pharisee and others*].
I am a Publican—one who has lost

Faith in all temples; only this remains:
Hope that the world will yet know happiness
Through love.

PHARISEE. Love for the Law?

SCRIBE. The written word?

PRIEST. Offer a sacrifice—all other love
Is an abomination unto God!

LEVI [*going towards the river with the woman*].
Love that is less than gentle to the weak
Masks hate, though hate be loyalty to God—
Such loyalty would sell him for a shekel.
[*He and the woman are lost among the crowd at the left.*]

WINE VENDOR [*re-appearing*].
Wine is like woman—a sip and a song,
And red of the rose on the mouth.
Like you the savour? drink deep and drink long
Till death end your day with a drouth!

SOLDIER. Ho there, you bard of Bacchus, give me wine!

WINE VENDOR [*a Greek boy, of slight but graceful build and tanned by the sun and wind*].
Ay, Master.
[*Pours from a slender jar into an earthen cup.*]
This is not a thirsty throng,
So drink my flagon empty.

PRIEST [*to Scribe and Pharisee*].
Let us go.

SCRIBE. And hearken unto John?
PHARISEE. 'Tis well to keep
Hand on these movements.
PRIEST. Yea, the people seem
Like children dancing in the market place
To every piper.
PHARISEE. We must set the tune
And make them dance to what their rulers play,
Or there'll be insurrection under John.
[*They mingle with the crowd.*]
SOLDIER [*to the wine seller*].
What hell-for-trouble do those jackals plot?
WINE VENDOR. Now 'tis the prophet, next day this or that.
SOLDIER [*returning the wine cup*].
Pest on these fellows! Must a soldier run,
Like any slave set over playing boys,
Hither and yon to regulate their pranks
And keep them in some order, lest they tear,
Scratch, bite or otherwise harm one another?
WINE VENDOR. Drink and forget that you are not in Rome,
Among the maids or at the Colosseum—
Two cups of this red wine are in one farthing.
SOLDIER [*taking the second cup and lifting it up*].
Cæsar!
VOICE OF JOHN. The axe is at the root!
SOLDIER [*lowering the cup and listening*].
The Vine?
Bacchus forbid!

[*Raises the cup and drinks.*]

WINE VENDOR. An axe, a flail, a fan—
Ha, prophet! Yonder folk know all these well;
But why not add a sword, a spear and shield?

SOLDIER [*returning the wine cup*].
He speaks to woodmen—shepherds, vine dressers
And all the ilk of those who drive the plough—
What do these peasants know of soldier craft?
Mars! 'tis a race of rats and moles and mice—
They are not fit for slaves, yet turbulent
Past reason.

WINE VENDOR. Take another cup of wine.

SOLDIER [*throwing a coin on the platter*].
Here is your farthing, lad—another cup
Might make one over-hasty with crowd,
And that is not the discipline of Rome.

[*The Soldier carelessly shoulders his way through the crowd at left and is lost to sight among the people who more and more gather near the river. The Wine Vendor follows, singing as he goes. The calls of the Vendors grow fainter. The murmur of the people at the river blends into a rhythmic sound as of wind.*

Two lovers, Obed and Ada, enter at right, coming through the rocky defiles, and approach the sycamore tree. His right arm is about her waist. He points to the rock beneath the tree.]

OBED. Rest here a moment, ere we go to John.
ADA. I am not weary, walking at your side.
OBED. Was it not noon when we went forth together?
ADA. Noon never was so near to night, my love.
OBED. All distances of time and place are lost
When we touch hands.
[*He lifts her to the top of the rock.*]
ADA. Then never let mine go,
And we will mock the moon and dare the sun
And gather stars like berries in a basket.
OBED [*springing to her side with a laugh*].
Time will melt like a snow flake on a leaf
When we are wed.
ADA. That is eternity.
OBED. Ay, where love is complete.
ADA. Then heaven must be
Two lovers underneath a sycamore.
OBED. And so a rock becomes the jasper throne
Set in the sky.
VOICE OF JOHN. Heaven is at hand!
ADA. 'Tis here—
John is a prophet.
OBED. Yet he has no maid—
How can he prophesy?
ADA. Because the world
Is full of lovers and he knows they love—
Could any prophesy without such knowledge?
OBED. If I could stand by yonder stream and tell

Men of our love, then would the world repent
And find salvation.

ADA. There would be no hate
Could they but listen to the tender song
We learned not long ago when we found love.

OBED. Rome would beat all her swords to pruning hooks,
And Israel would let her bullocks graze;
For there would be no legions, neither stones
Wet with the wasted blood of sacrifice—
O world! how long must all the lovers wail
Until their secret cleanse and make you glad?

ADA. When one is born of lovers like us twain—

OBED [*rapturously and leaping from the rock*].
Messias whom we seek! Come, let us go!

ADA [*leaning to his open arms*].
Kiss me, dear love, and we will find the Christ!
[*He takes her in his arms.*]

OBED. Ada, if Christ be anywhere on earth,
Cana will claim him at our wedding feast!

ADA. Our wedding feast! Obed, I count the days!
[*They go hand in hand towards the river. Enter Mary, Judas, Philip and Caiaphas.*]

MARY [*pointing to the rock.*]
Let me rest here a while.

PHILIP. The sun glares red,
Like Polyphemus' eye upon Ulysses,
Ere Night—the furtive, wily Ithacan—
Pierce it and put it out; yet there is time

For loitering beside a sycamore,
Mary, if you are underneath the bough.
[*He helps her up the rock.*]

JUDAS [*looking towards the river.*]
How all the world is gone out after John!

MARY [*with a gesture of contempt*].
Call you that crowd of cawing rooks the world?

CAIAPHAS [*sententiously*].
The world is where the people are.

VOICE OF JOHN. Repent!

MARY. Repent! Now must I also change my mind?

JUDAS. He means the world.

MARY. A world of cawing rooks?
They have no mind to change—would I could change
Yours, Judas.

PHILIP [*to Mary*].
And I yours.

JUDAS. A sound like wind
Comes from the wilderness, as though the wings
Of Michael beat above the head of John,
Announcing that Messias comes to men.
[*A Leper passes at a distance, lifting his cry of warning.*]

LEPER. Unclean! Unclean!

MARY [*shuddering.*]
Oh, what a world of pain!

CAIAPHAS [*angrily to the leper*].
Back to your tombs!

LEPER [*pausing, looks at the priest. He is a man in the prime of his days, on whom the disease has yet made but a few visible ravages*].
Ho, Caiaphas!

CAIAPHAS. Back! Back!

LEPER. I come to hear the prophet.

CAIAPHAS. To your tombs!

LEPER. Mayhap, O priest, he will show me Messias.

PHILIP [*to the leper*].
Messias a physician?

LEPER. He will lay
Hands on the sick.

CAIAPHAS. But lepers are defiled—
One may not touch polluted flesh and be
Without defilement.

LEPER. He who can make whole
A leper's body will not be afraid
Of what the Law saith; for in him the Law
Finds its fulfilment.

CAIAPHAS [*with a sneer*].
Where learned you the Law?

LEPER. At feet of her from whom all wise men learn.

CAIAPHAS. You mean the temple?

LEPER. Life!

PHILIP [*swiftly to Caiaphas*].
He answers you—
Zeus! but he answers you. Tell me, O man,

If there be aught in leprosy to give
One wisdom.

LEPER. Ay, for lepers are alone,
And so must learn to lean upon themselves.

PHILIP. But not on altars and that kind of thing?

LEPER. When pain makes man a living sacrifice—
Altars are void of meaning.

PHILIP. Yet you seek
Messias——

LEPER. Who will be the loneliest
Among the lonely.

JUDAS [*impatiently*].
You are demonized.

MARY [*to Judas*].
Let be—I like to hear the tomb-man talk—
Perchance you may find some new thing to learn
About your lord of lepers and the like.

LEPER [*sadly to Mary*].
Woman, whose face is like a poppy bud
Lifted above the green and tender wheat,
Your beauty is my banishment to depths
Of darker loneliness.

PHILIP [*to the leper*].
You have a friend,
O man of pain, for beauty exiles me.

LEPER. And so must Lord Messias be a friend
To lost and lonely ones.

[*He turns and goes painfully toward the river crying:*]

Unclean! Unclean!

MARY [*as a blind minstrel, Bartimæus, approaches—finding his way with a staff*].

Behold another to the help of John!

BARTIMÆUS [*stops at the sound of Mary's voice and fumbles for the psaltery hung at the side from his shoulder*].

O Lady, listen to my song!

CAIAPHAS. Away!

We want you not.

JUDAS. Let us not trifle here

With lepers and with beggars—let us go

Nearer to John.

MARY. A moment—I would hear

My minstrel.

PHILIP. Orpheus out of Arcady!

JUDAS [*to Caiaphas*].

The sun is almost down and yet we wait—

Missing the words of John—come with me, priest.

MARY. We will abide here at the rock until

You come with message of Messias.

[*To Bartimæus.*]

Play!

[*As Judas and Caiaphas go towards the river, Bartimæus draws near to Mary and Philip —striking with a plectrum the strings of his psaltery.*]

BARTIMÆUS. *How great!* cried the beggar to the king;
How good! sighed the sinner to the saint;
How white! cawed the crow to the dove's wing:
And the Lord God heard their plaint.

Over the stars where the white mists pile,
God leaned and listened and laughed a while;
For he knew that each was his own dear son,
With a work to do till the day was done!

MARY [*moved by the song*].
Blind minstrel, you have made me weep.

BARTIMÆUS [*approaching nearer, guided by the sound of Mary's voice*].
Lady,
I, too, have known tears, therefore is my song.

MARY. How you have wept to sing as you have sung!

BARTIMÆUS. That, lady, is the only way of song.

PHILIP. Nay, there is laughter on the lips of song.

BARTIMÆUS. When laughter is triumphant over tears—
But some laugh who have never wept, and these
Know not the goddess.

PHILIP. Euterpe is cold
To minstrels who have only found the strings,
And not the wind-blown passion of a harp.

BARTIMÆUS. Sir, you have sung.

PHILIP. And I have also laughed.

BARTIMÆUS. The wings of laughter are besprent
with tears.

PHILIP. To keep them soft for flight?

BARTIMÆUS. Ay, otherwise,
Life's noon would harden laughter's lifting
wings
And make them like a bat's.

MARY. Blind minstrel, come,
Sit underneath the sycamore with me.

BARTIMÆUS [*finding his way to the rock*].
Lady, your voice is like a hall of harps,
When in the night a wind goes whispering
Among the curtains, and they call to him,
So that by murmur of a silver sound
He may find them.

MARY [*as the minstrel sits at the rock*].
Ah, you have rightly said.
My heart is like a hall of silent harps
That wake to sound when love breathes on the
strings,
Calling my name. Tell me, O minstrel man,
How shall I keep a lover's feet from straying?

BARTIMÆUS. If he be blind, then let him hear
your voice;
If he be deaf, then let him see your face;
If he be blind and deaf, give him your lips;
And if he then be not consumed by love,
Your love is dead—so, lady, bury him.

PHILIP. A wise man!—Mary, pray put out my
eyes

That I may also see.

MARY [*intent upon the minstrel.*]

If love were dead,
My love would wait with balms before his tomb—
I could not leave him lonely on a hill
Among the sepulchres.

BARTIMÆUS. If love would sit
For long against a tomb, leaning her head
Bravely against its whited wall, oh, then
The stone would roll away that she might bear
Her balms and odours to anoint his feet.

MARY. And though the feet of him had turned to dust,
The mouth that once pressed mine, the eyes that looked
Long into mine, though these had turned to dust,
My patient love would call each golden grain
Of that same dear, divine, dust of my love
Back to the quickened clay becoming flesh,
Until we stood together in a dawn
Of lilies!

PHILIP. Mary, I love you like that.

MARY [*tenderly to Philip*].

And, Philip, I the Man of Kerioth.

BARTIMÆUS. Love is the resurrection and the life.
Rejoice, O man, who learned to laugh through tears,

That you are lost in Mary, and so find
Yourself. Love is the great reward, the sign
Of heaven's most high approval of a soul.
When God is ready for another song
To wing its gladness from the sky to earth,
He sends it to a lover who has found
Joy in the giving that seeks not its own.

PHILIP. God! how you have learned love.

MARY. What is your name?

BARTIMÆUS. Men call me Bartimæus.

MARY. And your home?

BARTIMÆUS [*with a laugh and a sweep of the strings*].
God's earth!

PHILIP. There are some rooms of that same house I like not over well.

MARY. Rooms full of shadows—
Rooms that are locked on phantoms of dead faith,
Dead hope, dead joy, dead love—phantoms that cry
Through key holes down long darkened passage-ways.

BARTIMÆUS. My house is one that is not made with hands;
Its rooms are many, and its open doors
Shut on no shadows.

PHILIP. House not made with hands?
Then you have dreamed it, and I would not live
Only in dream.

BARTIMÆUS. Mine is no house of dream
'Tis very real to me and beautiful.
O Philip, can you tell me how a bird
Feels on the nest when all the speckled eggs
Melt underneath her heart to feathered balls
Of chirping hunger? How the bleating ewe
Finds her three lambs and calls them to her side,
Though there be many mothers on the hill?
That is their secret never to be told—
And mine the certainty of things that eyes
Behold and see not.

MARY [*leaning towards the blind man*].
Oh, but I would see!

BARTIMÆUS. You must be born again—must be a child
With arms of joy wide open to the wind.

PHILIP. Minstrel, who taught you that?

BARTIMÆUS. A Carpenter.

PHILIP. I know a Carpenter and he is wise.

MARY. Judas knows one, knew him from boyhood, too.

BARTIMÆUS. Mine lives—

PHILIP [*quickly*].
Where?

BARTIMÆUS. At Capernaum.

MARY [*eagerly*].
The same!

PHILIP. He built my villa at Bethsaida.

BARTIMÆUS. Until I met him I was blind.

MARY. You mean?

BARTIMÆUS. He made me independent of two eyes
And taught me how to see life through my soul.

PHILIP. He who does that works more than miracles.

BARTIMÆUS. I know a lame man who has come to prize
His crutches through the Carpenter, and claims
He walks with greater joy on summer roads
Than they who travel on their sandaled feet.

PHILIP. I met him first along Tiberias
Where I have business with the fishermen.

BARTIMÆUS. He loves to talk with those who toil.

PHILIP. One day,
As I stood bargaining, he came and said:
"Brothers, would you not rather fish for men?"
Simon, a great wild fellow with a voice
Booming like billows on wave beaten rocks,
Answered: "One needs a tougher mesh for men——"
And then the Carpenter: "I know a net
That we will cast together, son of Jonas."

MARY. What did he mean?

BARTIMÆUS. Did Simon understand?

PHILIP. He smote his horny hands together, cried:

"A net draws up too many prickly things,
And fishing, master, is a lonely task."

MARY. What said the Carpenter?

PHILIP. He only smiled
And left the fishermen among their nets;
But I was forced to follow after him
Until we came unto Capernaum.

BARTIMÆUS. Talked you with him?

PHILIP. Until we found his workshop—
There he began with chisel, plane and saw,
Singing a little song of joy the while:

My hand to the board—
The white shaving curled—
I think that my Lord
So fashioned the world.

My hand to the beam
Soon planed to a spar,
As I in a dream
Saw God make a star!

MARY. He is a minstrel too.

BARTIMÆUS. All sons of God
Must sing.

PHILIP. Beneath his hand the tool found life,
And every fibre of the wood awoke
To resurrection of a spirit form—
Clusters of grapes, large lilies, birds a-wing—
The workshop melted into out-of-doors
With breath of some divine, creative wind
That blew upon the toiling Carpenter;

Until I bowed before its mastery,
Cried: "Galilean, let me work with you!"
And he: "One day we shall together find
The way of journeymen across the world."

MARY. Philip, I would know further of this man.

VOICE OF JUDAS. Art thou Messias?

VOICE OF JOHN. I am but a voice
Out of the wilderness, calling to men:
Make straight the crooked path before his feet!

VOICE OF JUDAS. Prophet of God, when will Messias come?

MARY [*pointing towards the river*].
Philip, I see a man within the sun!
[*The sun has slipped down the shoulder of the mountain and now hangs low in the sky behind a tall, remote figure watching the crowd at the river.*]

PHILIP [*following Mary's hand*].
The Carpenter!

VOICE OF JOHN [*loudly exultant*].
Behold the Lamb of God!

MARY. The Carpenter!

VOICE OF JUDAS [*ringing with joy*].
My Jesu! is it thou?

ACT III

SCENE.—*The Wedding Feast of Cana. Two weeks later. A room in the house of Obed the bridegroom.*

The earthen floor is spread with carpets of many colours. At rear centre a wide archway opens on a gallery of a court against a night of stars and moonrise. On either side of the entrance a spacious ledge strewn with cushions extends to right and left of the room where it runs at right angles to front. The walls are hung with garlands. Many brass lamps are suspended from the ceiling by bronze chains; clusters of candles project from the walls; in the soft glow of their light every detail of the interior is visible. In the centre is a platform covered with a red carpet beneath a canopy of palm leaves.

The room is full of guests, reclining along the ledge, eating and drinking from little tables placed at intervals. Among the cushions on the platform Obed and Ada recline —she with her head upon his breast. He wears the glorious apparel of a bridegroom

with a crown of wild flowers on his head. Her hair flows over her shoulders and is caught at the temples by a wreath of myrtle —her bridal garment glittering with pieces of silver—her arms and ankles adorned with bracelets of gold. At right of the platform musicians are seated, playing on pipes, harps, sackbuts, cymbals and drums.

Moving among the guests, or stopping to speak to Obed, or giving commands to the servants coming and going with flagons of wine on trays, the Master of the Feast is distinguished by a gold embroidered robe and staff.

It is the last evening of the wedding feast —rejoicing and laughter are at their highest.

OBED [*in a lull of laughter and silence of instruments*].

To-morrow we will share joy's dearest gift—

ADA. Silence?

A GUEST. More wine!

OBED. The guests are thirsty.

A GUEST. Wine!

A RABBI. Where wine is wanted, there physicians thrive.

ANOTHER [*holding his cup to a servant and bowing to the Rabbi*].

May wine be always on a Rabbi's mouth!

ANOTHER. A good old proverb, friend, and very true.

ANOTHER. Here is a better—

ANOTHER. What! know you a better?

ANOTHER. Hush you, and babble not, for you are drunk.

A RABBI [*toying with a cluster of raisins*].
There is an ancient parable that reads:
When Noah planted in a field the vine,
Satan went by and said—"What doest thou?"
"Planting a vineyard," Noah made reply.
"What for?" asked Satan. Then the patriarch:
"That men may come to know the joy of wine."

SEVERAL [*with laughter and lifting their cups*].
Hail, Noah!

RABBI. Then cried Satan—"Let me help,"
And Noah—"That you may."

REVELLERS [*at left, with boisterous laughter*].
Hell's in the cup!

RABBI. So Satan killed a lamb, a lion, sow
And ape, letting their blood soak in the roots
Noah had planted. Thus it is that man,
Before he drinks is dumb like any lamb,
But after many cups feels as a lion,
Until by further quaffing he becomes
A sow content to wallow in the mire,
And ends an ape that chatters, grins and gnarls,

Staggers and falls, curls there and goes to sleep!

OBED [*looking at a noisy group*].

Yonder are many who will soon be apes.

ADA. Dear, and our wedding feast!

A YOUNG MAN [*lifting a cup of wine*].

The bride! The bride!

[*He stands and sings to an accompaniment of harps.*]

Her eyelids have no stain of blue,
Her hair falls waving as it grew,
Her hands need not the henna-tone,
And those deep blushes are her own!

ALL THE GUESTS [*clapping their hands, join in the song*].

Her brow is like a misted moon,
Her eyes the sky at autumn noon,
Her mouth a poppy wet with rain,
Her throat is love mid lilies lain.

[*At a sign from the Master of the Feast, the musicians begin to play—at which many of the guests arise and salute the bride and bridegroom with outstretched hands and retire to the gallery. Throughout the evening there are such movements when guests depart and new ones take their places at the tables.*]

MASTER OF THE FEAST [*to the new comers*].

Welcome, O friends of Cana, to the feast
Of Obed and of Ada.

NEW COMERS [*saluting Obed and Ada*].
Hail to love!

OBED. I, Obed, answer for love on my heart.

NEW COMERS. May children be as vines upon your wall.

[*They take their places at the tables—servants bearing their food on platters with flagons of wine and cups, as a company of Maidens enter, at a sign from the Master of the Feast. To an accompaniment of music they dance about the platform strewing flowers on Obed and Ada from wicker baskets hung from their shoulders. As they dance they sing.*]

MAIDENS [*singing*].

Along the wall
Green tendrils crawl—
Love, thou art on my breast,
O sleep and take thy rest!

The clustered vine
Tells of the wine
Our love will one day pour
To children at thy door.

Their little feet
Are on the street
In laughter, song and play—
Wake, O my Love! 'tis day.

The sun is up—
Drink of the cup

I from love's flagon pour
To children at thy door.

[*Ada, under a shower of blossoms, rises and from a jar at her side throws silver pieces among the maidens who laughingly scatter to gather them from the floor.*]

ADA [*standing above the maidens with Obed*].
May you have love, friends of my maidenhood,
As I with Obed; may your wedding feast
Know laughter; may Messias be your guest.

MAIDENS. Messias will be master of all feasts,
When he is come to ransom Israel.

ADA [*to the guests, who rise at her word*].
Friends, in the name of him who is to come,
I thank you for your presence at our feast.

GUESTS. Ada, this is your hour—to you we bow.
[*They bow and seat themselves.*]

MASTER OF THE FEAST [*approaching Obed and Ada.*]
Except for revellers there would be wine
To last the night.

OBED. There's plenty and to spare.

MASTER OF THE FEAST. The guests are many and the revellers
Drink more than is the custom.

ADA [*distressed*].
Oh, the shame
If we fail of our hospitality!

OBED. Send forth the servants quickly through the town,
Bidding them buy more wine.

ADA. Ay, quickly send.
Shall it be said of Obed's wedding feast—
They had no wine!

REVELLERS [*still at left and growing more noisy —to a Servant.*]
Ho, fellow, give us wine!

SERVANT [*anxiously*].
Peace, peace, my masters! This is not the place
For noise and revelling—can you not see
The brow of Cana's bride is red for shame?

MASTER OF THE FEAST. It shall be even as you have said.

[*He retires to the gallery where he is seen talking to a servant.*]

REVELLERS [*pounding on the tables with their empty cups.*]
Wine! Wine!

[*Among the guests who enter at this moment from the porch are Mary of Nazareth, Jesus, Judas, Philip, Simon, Levi the Publican, Andrew, James and John. They recline at left near the revellers. The Master of the Feast approaches, and rebukes the noisy ones.*]

MASTER OF THE FEAST. Good friends, I pray you let not thirst for wine
Make you forgetful of the parable

Our reverend Rabbi told.

MARY [*to Jesus*].

Thev have no wine.

REVELLERS. Wine! Wine!

MARY [*to Jesus*].

Oh, speak to them—Ada is ashamed.

JESUS [*to Mary*].

Mother, my moment has not come.

JUDAS [*to Jesus*].

Speak now.

JESUS. Judas, have you not learned to wait?

JUDAS. To wait?—

Master, the world has waited over long.
Speak now with that divine authority
Men look to find in him who is Messias.

PETER. Yea, Master, 'tis a time for you to speak—
Rise up forthwith and let them hear your voice.

PHILIP. Master, give heed to what these say.

JAMES. A sign—

Give them a sign—a sudden miracle
To awe and silence them.

JOHN. Call to the sky
And make it thunder.

JESUS [*smiling on the disciples*].

Friends, you do not know
What spirit you are of.

SIMON [*with loud voice to the company*].

Oh, hear the word
Of Jesus who is called the Carpenter.

MASTER OF THE FEAST. Attend!
GUESTS. Speak, Jesus of Capernaum.
JESUS. Blessed are you who thirst for right-
eousness.
ADA [*smiling*].
Jesus, my friend!
JOHN [*with his arm over Jesus' shoulder*].
The friend of all the world!
JESUS. Of all who love.
JUDAS. Ah, Master, wisely said—
But not of those who hate.
JESUS. You are my friend?
JUDAS. Master, you know I am.
JESUS. Then must you love.
JUDAS. But not the hateful like these noisy ones!
JESUS. There are no hateful.
THOMAS [*one of the Revellers, to Judas*].
He has answered you.
Wine made us noisy, but the greater sin
Is yours who judge.
A REVELLER. We have enough of that
From Priest and Pharisee.
JESUS [*to the Revellers*].
All you are sons
Of one Eternal Father.
THOMAS. Sons of God?
There is no God! or if there be, he cares
No whit for us.
JESUS [*pointing to Obed and Ada*].
Friend, that is God.

RABBI [*rising and tearing his outer garment*].
Jesus,
Now you blaspheme!

AN ELDER [*leaving the table and going towards the door*].
This at a wedding feast!

JESUS [*to both*].
Hold, friends, have you not heard that God is love?

JOHN [*with enthusiasm*].
He has the word!

ELDER [*at the door and looking back*].
You trifle with the Name
That is above all other names!

RABBI [*joining him*].
God love!

[*They go out together*].

THOMAS [*laughingly to the others*].
The room is well rid of those wagging beards—
Come, let us finish what we have of wine.

THE REST [*lifting their cups*].
Well said—health, Carpenter.

[*They drink.*]

JESUS. And to be whole
Is health.

THOMAS. When I am sober I am half—
When I am tipsy, faith, then am I whole.

[*The others laugh.*]

JESUS. He is not whole who adds unto himself
What is without.

THOMAS. What mean you, Carpenter?

JESUS. Divided kingdoms do not stand.

THOMAS. How so?

JESUS. If you are half when sober, are you not
Divided?

THOMAS. Ay, and joined when I am drunk.

JESUS. And wine is that which is not of the soul?

THOMAS. It makes a pleasant mixture, Carpenter.

JESUS. I come to tell you of a wine within.

THOMAS. Show me the way to it that I may drink.

JESUS. First find yourself.

THOMAS. How can one find himself?

JESUS. If you will follow me you shall drink wine
Within my Father's Kingdom.

THOMAS. Where is that,
Jesu Bar Joseph?

JESUS. In your soul.

THOMAS. My soul?
I only have a soul when there is wine.

OTHERS. Ha! ha!

JESUS. The wine of which I speak is love.

THOMAS. A maiden's mouth, for instance?—not for me—
Blood of the grape! give me a flagon full,
And keep all women from tormenting me.

JESUS. I speak of love that loses life to give
Life to the world.

JUDAS [*to the Revellers*].

Hear you that word, O Sons
Of Belial?—life to a world that dies
Because you and your like sit down to drink
Wine that is trampled from the flesh of men!
Behold Messias who has come to call
Brave hearts and true to lift the Roman yoke
Forever from the neck of Israel!

THOMAS. The Carpenter? he makes yokes for a trade.

JESUS. My yoke is easy and my burden light.

THOMAS. I'll yoke me twixt two flagons of red wine.

JESUS. Nay, you will follow me.

THOMAS. Are you a prophet?

JESUS. Friend, I have seen your soul.

THOMAS [*laconically*].

What did you see?

JESUS. A sorrow that made you afraid.

THOMAS [*starting from the table*].

Afraid?

JESUS. And so you ran away from fear with wine.

THOMAS [*brokenly*].

You are a prophet!

JESUS. Friend of those who weep.

THOMAS [*leaving the others, goes to where Jesus sits among the disciples*].

Yea, I have sorrowed, Master.

JESUS [*reaching forth and taking him by the hand*].

Thomas, come!

THOMAS [*looking at Jesus*].
Let me go forth beneath the quiet stars,
And think a while.
JESUS. Go.
[*Thomas goes out into the night.*]
MARY [*to Jesus*].
You have made him whole.
JESUS [*to Mary*].
Not yet, my Mother, there are many days
Ere Didymus has learned to drink my cup.
PETER [*in a loud voice*].
Lord, I will drink thy liquor to the lees.
JUDAS. And I.
JOHN. And I.
JAMES. And I.
ANDREW. And I.
OBED. And I.
ADA [*to Jesus*].
If my love drink of that cup, Master, I
Must also drink.
JESUS [*rising*].
The wine is waiting, friends.
[*He goes out to the gallery where the servants are grouped listening.*]
REVELLERS. Ho! he has gone to get us heady wine!
MARY [*following Jesus, speaks to the servants as she passes by*].
Whatever he saith unto you, that do.

A Servant [*to Mary*].
Who would not minister to such a man?
Jesus [*to the servants in the gallery*].
Fill up these jars with water.
A Reveller [*listening*].
Water?—no,
I want red wine.
Judas [*to Peter*]. Now we shall have the sign!
Peter. A miracle!
James. That will Messias do.
Judas. Messias must work miracles.
Philip [*to Judas*].
How soon
You have forgotten what our Master said—
"An evil generation seeks for signs."
Judas [*passionately*].
There must be miracles! how otherwise
Can people know he is Messias—come
In majesty and like a King? This talk
With drunken fellows is to cast a pearl
To pigs—now we shall see him in his might.
Guests [*caught by the joy in the voice of Judas, rise at his words and turn to him*].
Messias?
Judas [*leaving the table walks down to the platform*].
Children of the Bridegroom, see—
Now is he at the door!
[*Jesus enters, followed by servants bearing flagons of water.*]

GUESTS. The Carpenter!

JESUS [*approaching the Master of the Feast who stands near Judas*].

Master, I bring you wine caught from the sky.

MASTER OF THE FEAST [*with a smile, takes a cup from a tray offered by one of the servants who pours from a flagon*].

Our custom is to set the best wine first
Before the guests.

JUDAS [*turning to the guests*].

A miracle!

PETER [*starting from the table and running towards the Master of the Feast*].

A sign!

THE REST OF THE DISCIPLES [*following Peter*].

Now shall you know our Lord.

REVELLERS [*walking unsteadily towards the servants who stand near the door with the flagons*].

Give us the wine.

OBED [*to Jesus*].

Wine from the sky? Jesus, you play with words.

ADA [*to Jesus*].

Where got you wine so quickly?

OBED [*to Ada*].

You forget
We sent for it—our friend but plays with words.

MASTER OF THE FEAST [*holding up the cup before all*].

Now let your cups be filled and drink the health
Of Ada.

[*As the servants pour into the proffered cups, murmurs of surprise run through the room*].

GUESTS. Wine? 'tis water!

MASTER OF THE FEAST. Drink, my friends.

[*The Guests lift their cups to Ada.*]

GUESTS. Your health and happiness!

ADA [*hiding her face on Obed's shoulder*].

Oh, I am shamed!

JUDAS [*to Jesus*].

Master!

SIMON. Where is the sign?

JESUS [*to both*].

Look in the cup.

JUDAS. Work now the miracle.

SIMON. Give us the sign.

JESUS. Look in the cup.

JUDAS. 'Tis only water there.

JESUS. Henceforth the sign of Jesus—Son of Man!

JUDAS [*eagerly*].

Nay, Master, you must break upon the world
Brighter than any sun. A little cup
Filled full of water surely is no sign.

JESUS. Who gives a cup of water in my name
Is my disciple.

JUDAS [*holding the cup to Jesus*].
Make the water wine,
Then will the world know that you are the Christ.

SIMON. Ay, that's the thing to do, Lord, make it wine.

JUDAS [*to the company*].
Now shall you see Messias going forth
Mantled with flame-gold like the morning sun!

GUESTS [*holding out their cups to Jesus*].
If you are Lord Messias, make this wine!

MARY [*coming close to Jesus and plucking his sleeve coaxingly*].
Jesus Bar Joseph, make the water wine.

ADA [*to Jesus*].
Jesus of Mary, make the water wine.

PHILIP [*indignantly to the rest*].
Blind eyes, how can you miss the miracle
Of Jesus' face—his eyes—his mouth—his voice?
What do you hurting him with "Sign! Sign! Sign!"—
Did he not come gold dusted of the stars
And dewy from the night unto the feast?
He is God's laughter and the love of men—
The innocence and mirth of boys and maids—
And yet you burden him with miracles!
Apollo and Adonis meet in him;
Bacchus transfigured, lifts a water cup
And with a whitened hand sprinkles the earth
Like summer rain.

[*Turning to Jesus.*]

O Carpenter, how long
Must you stand waiting for the faith that sees
How any word or sight or touch of you
Opens all doors that close on happiness!

JESUS [*joyously to Philip*].

Philip—O Philip!

JOHN [*caught by Philip's words, looks at Jesus*].

Master, forgive your friends and me.

SIMON [*looking at Jesus in wonderment as the sense of the new sign dawns on his mind*].

Water—
The sign of Jesus? So the fisher folk
Are called by him to cast their net for men!

ADA [*beginning to understand, calls to a servant*].

Give me a cup of this new wedding wine.

[*The servant bears a flagon to Obed who pours into a cup which he gives to Ada. She turns to the guests and holds high the cup*].

Let it be told hereafter how the sign
Was given at the Cana wedding feast—
The sign of Jesus called the Son of Man!

GUESTS [*holding their cups towards Jesus*].

Hail, Jesu, Son of Man!

[*They drink together.*]

JUDAS [*dashing his cup to the floor*].

I will not drink!

JESUS. Judas!

JUDAS [*going to the door and looking back*].

I go to find Messias.

PHILIP [*following Judas, lays a hand on his shoulder*].

Hold!

JUDAS [*looking sadly at Philip*].

I thought the Carpenter was he.

PHILIP [*gently*].

O blind,

Blind Man of Kerioth!

JUDAS [*lifts up his hands in passionate pleading to Jesus*].

Jesus Bar Joseph,

Make me believe as you have made me love!

JESUS. Judas!

[*There is such joy in his word that Judas and Philip are unconsciously compelled to him. The guests whisper among themselves.*]

ADA [*to Obed*].

To love is to believe.

JUDAS [*standing near Jesus and looking into his eyes*].

Master!

JESUS. What must Messias do?

JUDAS. Make water wine,
Stones bread; leap from a temple pinnacle;
Strike every mocking mouth with miracles;
Call lightning from the clouds, until the yoke
Upon our necks is broken and the land
Set free from Rome.

JESUS. I too was tempted, friend,
By such a thought.

JUDAS. Did not the prophet say:
"The anger of the Lord is on all nations,
His fury on their armies"? That is Christ!
JESUS. Also he saith: "He hath no comeliness—
He is despised of men—a man of sorrows."
JUDAS. Messias is a King—you make him slave.
JESUS [*his face transfigured by his vision*].
The slave of man!
JUDAS. We have enough of slaves—
Man must be freed from bondage by a Lord
Whose word will make all earthly fetters fall.
JESUS. Only a slave can set man free.
JUDAS [*with anger showing in his voice*].
A slave!
JESUS. Who has no place to lay his head.
JUDAS. You paint
A thing less than a leper—called the Christ
JESUS. He who will lift earth to the highest star
Must make his hands meet underneath the load.
PHILIP [*with his old-time laughter*].
O Hercules!
JUDAS. Do that, and men would nail
Your hands together.—Jesus, I know men—
You have dreamed over long among your tools—
They are like horses to be tamed by bit
And bridle, ready to be rode when one
Has curbed them.
JESUS. Men are all the sons of God,
And God is love, and only love can speak
With love.

LEVI. So love found me.

THOMAS [*entering and hearing, cries, as he runs to Jesus' feet*].

As love found me!

ADA [*to Obed*].

Was ever love like this at any feast?

JUDAS. Love will not save the world from Roman hate,
And we must groan beneath Tiberius
Until Messias come with miracles.
[*Going towards the door.*]
I will run round the earth and back again,
Calling and calling over every hill,
Until the sky grow weary of my voice
And rain down stars in answer to my prayer.
These hands will beat against the gates of God
Until they open with a fiery flood
Of ruin and of wrath on Babylon.
Yea, I will call to every thunder cloud:
"Break forth with lances of consuming light,
And let them be for signs that Christ is come!"
[*He goes out in passion from the room. The eyes of all are turned on Jesus who stands with outward looking eyes as though upon the world.*]

ACT IV

SCENE.—*Lake Shore near Capernaum. Six months later. Early morning of a late spring day.*

The background is a perspective of the town—a vista of square houses of basalt or Syenian granite, and, on higher ground, the marble dome of a great synagogue. Behind the town are sloping fields of white, red, blue and purple anemones with patches of mustard plants—the dark green leaves making vivid their yellow blossoms. The fields melt into hills of olive groves intersected by vineyards, with groups of pomegranates and palms.

A wide road curves along the edge of the town, lifted above the shore of the lake by a low wall of basalt, to the right past a broad quay that juts into the water. Above the quay is a store room with a wide door in the centre and over it a window with closed shutters. At the juncture of this building and the road is a seat of customs—a ledge of marble behind a large oaken table.

At intervals along the wall there are wide stone steps descending to the shore from the

road. On the left of the scene there is a house above the wall with a court—the house of Simon. In the court is a garden of melons and cucumbers. Through the crevices of the wall are masses of cyclamen.

The foreground is the shore of the lake of Galilee, shaped like an amphitheatre, reaching down at a considerable distance to the front. Along the sand are several small fishing boats held upright on their keels by poles against the gunwales. Large drag-nets are spread along the sand, drying.

From the city is heard the faint hum of voices. Along the road pass and repass camels and asses with panniers of fruit, wool, dried fish and other commodities. Men, women and children go by. Sailors are busy on the quay with bales of merchandise. At the seat of customs Levi receives the taxes. Simon, below his house, sits on the sand with James and Andrew, mending nets.

SAILORS. Yo-e-o! Yo-e-o!

CAMEL DRIVERS.

Wind of the south,
Blow on the mouth—
The mouth of my love;
Wind of the west,
Blow on the breast—
The breast of my dove!

SAILORS. Yo-e-o! Yo-e-o!

MULETEERS.

In Galilee, in Galilee,
The melon gourds are gold,
Wild honey of the humble bee,
The olive and the apple tree,
The sheep within the fold,
Make every moment bliss to me
In Galilee, in Galilee.

SAILORS. Yo-e-o! Yo-e-o!

[*A burst of laughter from the street and then a throng of children running down the steps to the boats where they play at hide-and-seek.*]

SIMON [*holding up a mended net and trying the meshes with his hands*].

The world is all awake.

JAMES [*filling a shuttle with twine from a reel*].

And children play.

CHILDREN [*singing among the boats*].

Catch me, catch me, if you can—
Ugly, old and ragged man!
While we run we laugh and shout—
One—two—three—and you are out!

LEVI [*taking change from a Camel Driver*].

One stater more.

CAMEL DRIVER [*throwing a coin on the table*].

Plague on your taxes, man!

MULETEER [*flipping a piece of money at Levi*].

Mine is a shekel, publican?

LEVI [*looking at the panniers*].

Raisins?

MULETEER. And figs.

LEVI. Whither?

MULETEER. Jerusalem.

LEVI. Pass on.

[*From the road at left a lame man with crutches pauses at the seat of customs.*]

LAME MAN [*to Levi*].

Sir, may I rest?

LEVI [*kindly*].

Sit here, friend.

LAME MAN [*placing his crutches against the wall, sits on the bench*].

I thank you.

LEVI [*counting money into little heaps before him*].

Are you not early on the road?

LAME MAN. Sun's up,

And day has its adventures.

LEVI. Whence are you?

LAME MAN [*laughing*].

From nowhere to nowhither.

LEVI. Do you beg?

LAME MAN. I am too lame to work, and one must eat.

LEVI [*handing to him a number of small leather bags*].

This for the shekels, those for staters—work!

LAME MAN [*taking the bags and looking with surprise at Levi*].

You trust me? I am light of finger, friend.

LEVI. Your eyes have answered me.

LAME MAN [*counting money into the bags.*]

You questioned them?

LEVI. One learns much from the many passing here.

SAILORS. Yo-e-o! Yo-e-o!

CHILDREN. Ugly, old and ragged man!

LAME MAN [*looking up and watching the children*].

Ugly, and old and ragged?—I am that.

LEVI. Only outside.

LAME MAN. And what is there within?

LEVI [*tying up the bags that the other fills*].

The soul—the beautiful, the laughing soul.

LAME MAN. There is no soul—only the flesh that limps.

LEVI. Ay, you will limp until you find your soul—

Then you will throw away your crutches, man.

SIMON [*stretching his arms*].

Toiling all night for fish we did not find,
Burdens my body.

ANDREW [*looking up from his net and watching the children play*].

One must toil for them.

CHILDREN. While we run we laugh and shout—
One, two, three, and you are out!

JAMES. Where is the Master?
SIMON. Hunting his lost sheep.
ANDREW. Judas?
SIMON. Ay.
JAMES. Better let him go.
SIMON. He'll not—
Never was there such folding of a flock—
He'll seek until he find that wanderer.

[*Among the people on the street, Jesus is seen walking with Judas, Philip, John, and Nathaniel; they approach Levi and the Lame Man.*]

LAME MAN [*holding up his crutches*].
Throw these away?
LEVI. When you have found your soul.
LAME MAN. My soul? Man, I have been a thief, a dog
Hunting for offal in a village street!
LEVI. And always have you been a Son of God.
LAME MAN. Who taught you this?
LEVI. Jesus, the Carpenter.

[*Levi bends over the money. The Lame Man, looking up, sees Jesus among the crowd, drawing near.*]

LAME MAN. Who comes with eyes of laughter and of love?
LEVI [*gazing down the street*].
My Carpenter!
LAME MAN [*gathering his crutches*].
He must not find me here—

Those eyes will shame me, knowing what I am.

LEVI [*laughing as he puts his arm around the other's shoulder*].

O foolish fellow! he is not the man
To shame you—he will help you find your soul.

JESUS [*approaching the seat of customs with the others*].

Levi!

LEVI [*rising from the table and spilling the money from a bag to the pavement*].

Hail, Carpenter!

JESUS. Come, follow me.

LEVI. Whither, O Carpenter?

JESUS. Across the world.

LEVI [*laughing*].

Faith; 'tis a journey.

JESUS. And the road is good.

LAME MAN [*looking earnestly at Jesus with growing confidence*].

I love the road, though I am very lame.

JESUS [*reaching forth a hand to the lame man*].

Love of the road will make you leap for joy.

LAME MAN. With crutches one walks painfully the miles.

JESUS. Come, friend, and I will make your crutches wings.

LAME MAN. Levi, let fall the money—we will go.

LEVI. And going, find your soul?

LAME MAN [*laughing*].

If there be such

I'll find it where the wayside banks are green.

JESUS. Now we will gather Simon and the rest.

[*They descend the steps near the seat of customs and cross the sands towards the fishermen, talking as they go.*]

MULETEERS [*in fragment of their song*].

The sheep within the fold,
Make every moment bliss to me
In Galilee, in Galilee.

SAILORS. Yo-e-o! Yo-e-o!

[*Simon's boy—tanned and strong, with black curly hair and eyes aglow with fun—runs up to Jesus with outstretched hands.*]

BOY. One, two, three and you are out!

JESUS [*opening his arms and catching him to his breast*].

Ho, little man!

CHILDREN [*clutching at the robe of Jesus*].

Come play, dear Carpenter.

JUDAS [*impatiently to the children*].

You must not hinder him.

CHILDREN [*pointing at Judas*].

O scowlly man!

JESUS [*with Simon's boy on his shoulder*].

Suffer the little children come to me.

CHILDREN [*making a song at Judas*].

Catch us, catch us, if you can—
Scowlly, scowlly, scowlly man!

JUDAS. But, Master, there is work to do and these
Keep us from it.

[*Simon and the others look up and seeing Jesus among the children leap from their nets and run to him.*]

SIMON. Master!

JESUS [*kissing the eyes of Simon's boy*].
Of such is heaven!

PHILIP [*to Judas*].
Have you not yet his secret?

JUDAS [*to Philip*].
I am torn
Between my love of him and deepening doubt!
[*He turns away from the rest and walks moodily down the shore.*]

SIMON [*with Andrew and James at Jesus' side*].
Master, we've waited weeks for you to come.

JESUS [*with a glad, welcoming smile*].
Simon, there are so many sheep to fold!

SIMON [*looking at Judas, turns with a deep laugh*].
You brought the black one home.

JESUS. A shepherd leaves
His folded flock and seeks until he find
The lost lamb. So must you care for the sheep.

SIMON. Master, I understand, and I am glad
For Judas; though he puzzles still and frown.

JESUS. Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way
That leads into the Kingdom of my joy,
And few there be that find it.

SIMON. We have found
And we will follow faithful on the way.

JESUS. Simon Bar Jonas, may you never fail.

SIMON [*stretching his arms in the conscious joy of his strength*].

Fail?—Simon fail? Not he!

JESUS [*a moment's sadness on his face*].

Satan will sift
Each man of you for chaff among your wheat.
[*As he looks at the children and out on the world, the sadness lifts and is gone before a divine mirth that glorifies his mouth.*]
But he will find you mostly ripened wheat.

CHILDREN. Jesus, dear Jesus, sit upon the sand
To play with us.

JUDAS [*returning, speaks to Jesus*].

Is it not time to go?

JESUS [*sitting on a rock near a boat, beckons the children to his feet*].

Time? Ah, you are so anxious of the time!
Here, where the children laugh, the infinite
Makes me forgetful of your many morrows.
[*The disciples sit near Jesus, leaving an open space for the children at his feet.*]

A LITTLE GIRL [*holding up to Jesus a lump of clay*].

Jesus, make me a bird!

JESUS [*taking the clay from her hand and beginning to shape it with swift fingers*].

What kind of bird?

LITTLE GIRL [*after a moment's hesitation*].

Make it a dove.

SIMON'S BOY [*watching Jesus*].
Jesus, make it a hawk.

JESUS [*as the shape of a bird grows under his fingers*].
We need more clay to make a hawk.

CHILDREN [*clapping their hands as the bird form grows out of the clay*].
See! see!

LITTLE GIRL [*her eyes big with excitement*].
Oh, make the wings wide.

SIMON'S BOY. And then it will fly.

SIMON [*smiting his knee with his fist*].
Master, if fishes could be made from sand,
We would no more go toiling with the net.

JESUS [*giving wings to the clay*].
Simon, the joy is only in the task—
What would you do with days removed from work?

SIMON. Right there, my Master, for one Sabbath day
Of idling in and out of synagogues
Makes me a hungry ox hitched to a post.

NATHANIEL. Jesus, I do not like a synagogue.

JESUS [*smiling back*].
Nathaniel, you pray best beneath a tree,
And I upon a hill——

SIMON. I in a boat——

JOHN [*watching the upturned faces of the children*].
And I with children.

PHILIP. I on country roads.

JUDAS. I could pray best among a host of shields
Beating a highway out of Roman spears
For Israel—not making birds from clay.

JESUS. Impatient Judas.

JUDAS. Master, let us go.

JESUS. And leave the children?

CHILDREN. Jesus, stay with us.

JESUS [*tenderly*].
My little ones, always you are with me.
[*To the disciples.*]
It would be better for a man to leap
Into the lake—a millstone round his neck—
Rather than harm one of these little ones
Believing me.

PHILIP [*with laughter to Judas*].
So, Judas, be a child.

JUDAS [*bitterly*].
With all this man's work waiting to be done,
How can we tarry on a beach in dream?

JESUS. Judas, tell me who have done most for men—
The lad with many-coloured coat of dreams
Or they who sold him unto Ishmael?
[*Judas is silent.*]

PHILIP. The minstrels and the dreamers of the world
From Orpheus until now have always harped
To stones that did not know what made them dance—

The stones that leap on dreamers to their death!

JESUS. And only they who harp can make stones bread.

THOMAS. Master, take up your harp and make men bread.

JESUS. Thomas, I have a harp—these are the strings.

[*He points to the children.*]

THOMAS. What is the harp?

JESUS. All they who follow me.

PHILIP. And what the song?

JESUS. The Song of Brotherhood.

[*He holds up the finished clay before the children.*]

CHILDREN [*clapping their hands*].
Now make it fly.

JUDAS [*to Jesus*].
Even the children plead
For signs!

JESUS [*to the children*].
Nay, children, you must make it fly.

CHILDREN [*as Jesus covers the bird with his left hand pointing to the sky with his right*].
We will—we will!

[*They follow his hand with eager, laughing, upturned faces and pointing fingers*].
The sun shines on its wings!
There is another—and another—see,
The sky is full of white and feathered wings!

THOMAS [*looking into the sky*].

I do not see them.

JUDAS [*to Jesus*].

It is in your hand.

JESUS. I only made for them a bird of clay——

JUDAS. A bird of clay? that is no sign.

JESUS [*looking at the children*].

A sign?

Lo, it is there—the gift of dream that turns
Earth into swift and upward flight of birds!
Be as the children, Judas, and the world
Will break forth into laughter at your voice,
Heaven will come down and God will walk again
In man's lost garden.

[*He gives the dove to the little girl, who walks away with it up the shore, followed by the others, except Simon's boy, who stands at Jesus' knee, looking up into his face.*]

SIMON'S BOY [*to Jesus*].

Now make me a hawk.

JESUS [*to the boy*].

Have you the clay?

SIMON'S BOY. I have a piece of wood—

Make me a boat.

[*He takes a piece of wood from the girdle of his tunic and gives it to Jesus.*]

JESUS. Simon, give me your knife.

[*Simon takes a sheath-knife from his belt and hands it to Jesus, who begins to whittle at*

the wood—the boy watching him or stooping down to play with the shavings that fall at Jesus' feet.]

SAILORS. Yo-e-o! Yo-e-o!

CHILDREN [*at a distance near the wall*].

Fly away, dove,
Fly away, dove!
Carry a kiss
To the one I love.

[*The sun is higher in the heaven, and the street is filled with people. There are cries of drivers, sounds of many voices in laughter or salutation or anger.*]

LAME MAN [*watching the boat take shape in Jesus' hands*].

Give me a blade and I will make a mast.

ANDREW [*drawing his knife from its sheath*].

Here.

[*He gives the knife to the Lame Man.*]

LAME MAN [*stooping to take a piece of drift wood from the sand*].

This will do.

[*He whittles the wood.*]

JESUS [*looking up from his work at the lame man*].

You are a carpenter?

LAME MAN. I have tried all trades, Lord, and mastered none.

JESUS. If you will work with me you shall become
A Master.

LAME MAN. Lord, I broke this leg upon
A scaffold—then no man had need of me.
JESUS. But I have need of you.
LAME MAN [*laughing*].
A sorry thing
Am I to minister to any man.
JESUS. If you will follow me the lame shall walk
The lighter for your word.
JUDAS [*eagerly to Jesus*].
Will he have power
To make a cripple walk when he is lame?
Let him be healed.
JESUS [*to Judas*].
Judas, you seek a sign?
JUDAS [*imploringly*].
O Master! Make the lame man leap and walk,
Then will the world believe that you are Christ.
JESUS. Am I the Christ?
JUDAS. Lord, you have said; but oh,
You tarry over long to give a sign.
JESUS. If I can make this lame man teach the lame
To bear the burden of infirmity,
Finding their crutches wings of lifting joy,
Would that not be a sign?
JUDAS. The world is weak—
So weak, and waits the sudden hand of God
In some arresting sign to give it faith.
JESUS. There are no sudden signs of God.

JUDAS. The wind
Out of the desert pouring down the hills;
The lash of lightning curling from the cloud;
The devastation of a locust blight;
Surely are sudden signs direct from God.

JESUS. These are but angels of the air and earth,
Lifters of trumpets calling man to war
Wherein he learns life's purpose—mastery.

JUDAS. But think of death that strikes the strong man down,
Leaving his wife and children, or a bride
Of yesterday; think of the fatherless
And all the lonely little ones who weep;
Are these not signs—is evil not a sign—
Are grief, and pain, and sickness, not a sign—
Signs that are sudden from the hand of God?

JESUS. All these were ever in the plan of God—
Waves to be breasted till the swimmer grows
Buoyant above them—hills for stronger thews—
Heights that are set for half unfolded wings.
He who would follow me must take his cross—
Not shrink from it nor seek to lay it down.

LAME MAN [*with joy of self-discovery in his voice*].
Lord, I will follow you on crutches!

JESUS [*with his hand on the Lame Man's shoulder*].
Come!

SIMON'S BOY [*clapping his hands*].
The boat is made!

JESUS [*holding out his hand to the Lame Man*].
Now we will step the mast.
[*He takes the mast and fits it in the boat.*]

SIMON'S BOY. A leaf shall be the sail.
[*He runs towards the children still playing up the shore.*]

SIMON [*looking at the Boy and laughing*].
And sand the sea!
Give him a twig and he will make a forest—
A blade of grass and he's a trumpeter.

PHILIP. Yet Judas asks a sign! Give me the sign
Of childhood in a triumph over tears.
[*The crowd begins to gather from the road until the shore is filled with people drawing near to Jesus.*]

VOICES [*from the crowd*].
Where is he?
There.
Down by the boat?
'Tis he—
Talking with Simon Peter and the rest.

And does he heal the sick?
Yes.
No.
Yes.
No.
Is any hurt among us?

There is one—
Possessed of devils.
Careful! she will tear
You with her teeth.
Not now—wait till her eyes
Roll and her teeth gnash.
There was a leper—

A Leper? No, he could not cleanse a leper.

He could—did he not turn the water wine
At Cana?
Yes.
A rumour!
No, 'tis true.

[*The disciples gather about Jesus as the crowd draws nearer.*]

JUDAS. Master, they seek a sign.

VOICES. He waits for us.
How comely is his hair.
Like russet gold
On autumn apples.
He is like a king.

His eyes are like cornflowers in the sun.

David before Goliath looked like him.

Come, let us weave for him a crown
Of laurel and of lilies.

Wait his word—
A voice that is the sound of little waves
Falling on golden sand along the shore.
[*At the note of a wailing cry, as from the throat of a hurt animal, the crowd shrink back against the wall.*]
Make way for her—'tis Mary Magdalene!
[*From the crowd Mary stands, her beautiful face distorted and her hair dishevelled.*]

MARY. Fools to be so deluded by this man!

JUDAS [*running to her*].
Mary!

MARY [*gazing vacantly at him, begins to laugh wildly*].
I know you not.

JUDAS [*reaching forth to take her hand*].
Come, follow me.

MARY [*resisting him*].
Nay, Marah is my name—called bitterness.

VOICES. Is not that Judas?
Ay, he loved her once—
They were to wed.

MARY. Your hand is hot on mine—
Are you a stake—I burning for a witch?
[*She screams and falls on the sand.*]

VOICES. Now are the devils come tormenting her.

If Jesus be Messias, he will speak,
Calling the devils out of her.

JUDAS [*kneeling to lift Mary from the sand*].

Rise up,
My love.

[*He lifts her in his arms and carries her down to where Jesus stands.*]

VOICES. Watch now and see what he will do.

JUDAS [*still holding Mary in his arms, stands before Jesus*].

Master, behold the woman whom I left
To follow you!

[*Mary is quiet in his arms—her eyes rolled back in a cataleptic fit.*]

JESUS. Lay her upon the sand.

[*Judas places Mary at Jesus' feet, who looks down at her.*]

VOICES. What will he do?

JESUS [*in a low voice*].

My little sister, wake
And look on me!

[*Mary stirs like a sleeping child and moans as in pain.*]

VOICES [*the crowd drawing near, some almost at Jesus' side*].

If he restore her——

JUDAS [*with wonder in his eyes gazes down at Mary*].

Lord!

JESUS. Mary of Magdala, who loved so much,
Open your eyes, forgetful of your pain.

[*Mary begins to talk in broken sentences.*]

MARY. I am a woman—love me—that is Christ!

JUDAS. O Master, see how I have hurt her heart!

PHILIP [*with his great love of Mary transfiguring his face*].

A man's love is too rough and rude a thing
For God's red flower called a woman's heart.

JESUS [*with a voice that rises like a sudden wind among the trees—a sound that brings the multitudes and the disciples to their knees*].

Mary of Magdala, your Master calls!

[*At his voice, Mary's eyes open on Jesus. From their blue depths there is infinite understanding blent with joy.*]

MARY. I heard my mother call!

JUDAS [*on his knees at her side and taking her hand*].

All mothers call
With Jesus' voice.

MARY [*supported on the shoulder of Judas*].

Judas, have we not found
Christ in a garden?

JUDAS [*exultantly lifts Mary to her feet and with his arm about her waist faces the kneeling people*].

Men, behold the sign—
The sign of Jesus Christ the Son of God!

ACT V

SCENE.—*Before the garden of Gethsemane. Two years later. The night of the betrayal of Jesus.*

An ivy-covered wall of rough stone extends across the rear of the scene which is filled by a grove of olives. Within the wall at centre is a gate. At right and left are olive trees through which a road winds past the garden. At the left of the gate, against the wall, is a large stone olive press over which a tree from the garden extends its branches. Below the road to the front is a field of wild flowers and berry bushes. The paschal moon is visible above the trees of the garden and, as the act progresses, slowly climbs a sky of many stars.

In the moonlight every detail of the scene is outlined with a silvery glow that gives a fairy charm to the garden.

Seated at the olive press, or lying on the grass, are some of the disciples and, among them, Philip, Thomas, Andrew, Bartimæus, Levi and the Lame Man.

THOMAS [*at the olive press*].

My heart is heavy, for the Master's face
Was white with sorrow when he entered there.

LEVI [*rising from the grass and going to the gate where he stands looking over it*].

Why did he leave us lonely at the gate?

BARTIMÆUS [*at the olive press, leaning forward with his hands clasped on his staff*].

Is the gate open? I can only feel
How soft the moonlight falls among the leaves.

THOMAS. The gate is closed on silence.

BARTIMÆUS. I can hear
Low laughter of the leaves.

THOMAS [*listening*].

It is the brook
Running to tell the olive trees that Christ
Prays in a garden.

BARTIMÆUS [*holding up a hand uncertainly*].

Is there not a wind?

THOMAS [*plucking a leaf from a vine on the wall*].

Not so much as to stir this leaf of vine.

ANDREW [*to Bartimæus*].

An angel brushed you with a wing.

LAME MAN. What peace
Is on this place!

PHILIP. Within all garden walls
Peace walks with Christ.

LAME MAN. As on a summer road.

PHILIP. Why not a winter one?

LAME MAN [*laughing*].

'Tis all the same—
His feet would make the frost—vines, and the snow—
White lilies.

BARTIMÆUS. I can smell the cyclamen.

LAME MAN. There must be honeysuckle on the wall.

ANDREW. Why did not Judas go within the garden?

THOMAS. Something is on his mind.

LEVI. He walks alone
Of late, frowning and talking to himself.

LAME MAN [*angrily*].

'Tis he who made the Master's face so white
With sorrow.

ANDREW. Always has there been a point
Of difference between the two.

LEVI. And yet
Jesus has ever leaned on Judas.

ANDREW. Ay,
But something happened at the paschal feast
That sunders them.

LAME MAN. And Jesus grieves for that.

PHILIP. What did he mean by saying—"One of you
Betrays me"?

BARTIMÆUS. Every one who sits to learn
Betrays his teacher 'til he is a master.

PHILIP. And we are very dull—and so betray?
Blind man, how well you see! and that is all
The Master meant?

THOMAS. Ay, only thus betray
Beauty, goodness, and truth by failing them—
So far beyond the reach of earthly hands.

LAME MAN. I know what happened at the feast.

PHILIP. Tell us.

LAME MAN. Judas is yet beneath the tyranny
Of signs and wonders—fails to see that Christ
Came unto men to make them reconciled
With life—and frets the Master with his plea:
"The people need a sign."

BARTIMÆUS. Two years have passed
Since Jesus gave the Magdalene her mind
And blessed their love, yet Judas asks a sign!

PHILIP. There is a kind of man to whom the world
Is like a crust of black, abandoned bread
Found by a beggar who is forced to eat
Or starve, and so asks honey thickly spread
To hide the taste from his too dainty tongue.

LAME MAN. No one has learned of Jesus till he find
The taste of life most wonderfully sweet.

PHILIP. Life is a comb of honey to the taste—
If it be bitter, then the tongue is coated
With gall of anger or the love of self.

ANDREW. Life is not sweet to Judas.

PHILIP. So he seeks
Signs and more signs to make it to his taste.
ANDREW. His tongue is coated then?
PHILIP. Ay, with the gall
Of anger. He who hates as Judas hates,
Makes life a crust of black and bitter bread—
Hate always is revealed in asking signs.
THOMAS. But surely, Philip, one may hate the man
Who ravishes a wife and slays her child?
PHILIP [*rising and walking to and fro before the olive press—his face transfigured with the ecstasy of his vision*].
Life is a test of love before the face
Of all that is unlovely, evil, vile;
And he becomes a master who withstands
Temptation to unloose the tongue of hate,
Prevailing through the godhood of a smile!
Such is our glad, divine, dear Carpenter—
One smile of Jesus is the sign of signs
And more than any marvel.
[*After a pause.*]
We must win
The world through love and laughter and proclaim
With joy the coming of the Son of Man.
LAME MAN. When Christ comes from the garden we will take
Him by the hand and go upon all roads

Shouting our secret: "Joy is now the sign
Of man's redemption!"

BARTIMÆUS. Then the white will fade
From Jesus' face, when he finds we are strong
And ready for the road!

ALL [*rising and standing near the gate*].
The road! the road!

PHILIP. Come, let us walk a while till Jesus comes
Out of the garden.

BARTIMÆUS. I sit here and wait.

[*The others go out at right through the trees. The blind man sits in quiet reverie as though listening to little, inaudible sounds. The moonlight shines down upon his face from a cloudless sky. In a sweet, gentle voice he begins to croon a song.*]

Little boy Jesus,
Tell what you are—
Moondrift and white cloud
Caught on a star!

Little boy Jesus,
What did you see?
Berries and blossoms
In Galilee!

Little boy Jesus,
Where did you go?
Down by the Jordan
Watching it flow!

Little boy Jesus,
What is your will?
Wood for a cradle
On a green hill.

[*Mary Magdalene comes down the road at left, stealing softly, intent on the song; as it ends she approaches Bartimæus.*]

MARY. Blind man, where did you learn that cradle song?

BARTIMÆUS. I passed a stable long ago and heard
A mother sing.

MARY. Where, blind man?

BARTIMÆUS. Bethlehem—
I was one of those shepherds on the hill
To whom an angel sang.

MARY [*sitting at his side*]. What did you see?

BARTIMÆUS. A golden star hung like a lamp within
A rift of cloud.

MARY. And then?

BARTIMÆUS. A luminous
Glad face below the star.

MARY. Lord Gabrielle!

BARTIMÆUS. The angel of all mothers, Magdalene.

MARY. You were not always blind?

BARTIMÆUS. A shadow came
Between the sun and me not many months
After the star; but first I saw the babe!
Then Bartimæus had no further need
Of eyes, who had beheld the holy child.

MARY. Where is the Master?

BARTIMÆUS. In Gethsemane.
Why are you here?

MARY. I wait for Judas.

BARTIMÆUS. He
Went not with the disciples—Magdalene,
I fear for Judas.

MARY [*bitterly*].
Oh, these aching months
Of pleading and of prayer to turn him back
From what he means to do!

BARTIMÆUS. The Master knows—
The others only wonder, watch and wait.

MARY. He is in fellowship with Caiaphas,
Plotting to prove that Jesus is the Christ.

BARTIMÆUS. Mary, the Master knows—be not afraid—
No harm can come to him from any man.

MARY. But harm may come to Judas—hurt of soul
That will forever mar the man I love.

BARTIMÆUS. Then you must love him all the more—how else
Can souls be saved?

MARY. O Bartimæus, you
Of all men first made me aware of Christ
That day down by the Jordan when you sang—
Now you must teach me how to keep this man
From harm.

BARTIMÆUS. Keep watch, and when you see him near,
Lead me within the garden; but meanwhile,
Tell me what Judas ponders in his heart.

MARY. First hear my story: after Judas found
His friend and Master near Bethabara,
I was hot anger and a vengeful flame
Upon the man who robbed me of my love.
Day followed day and night came after night,
Until, so lonely and bereft of joy,
My thoughts were tangled in the purple web
Of sorrow, and I raved across the fields,
Along the roads, filling the villages
With maledictions on all love, until
The people whispered: "Mary is possessed
Of devils!" Then I heard a voice that said:
"My little sister, look on me!" First peace—
Peace I have sometimes glimpsed down dim ravines
Of vineyards, ere the dew has left the dawn—
Peace I have fancied on a baby's face
Pillowed upon the breast, or found above
Eyes that are heavy with the dream of death—
Then like a swimmer rising from the pool

Down which he dived, reason returned to breathe
Within its element so lately left,
So proudly spurned, so gladly won again.
Yea, I was borne upon the balanced wings of peace,
Like any bird a-homing through the heavens,
Up, up into the blue of Jesus' eyes!

BARTIMÆUS. I saw them with the shepherds when we found
Him lying in a manger!

MARY. Then I knew
That all the love of earth through all the years
Of loving, since a woman's mouth began
To stir men out of slumber into song,
Was met in Jesus' eyes, and he the bride
And he the groom forever at the door.

BARTIMÆUS. Mary, you have learned Christ!

MARY. But this I found:
A world not ready for this lover-man,
Confusing him with images of clay
On temple tables, seeking for a sign—
A manifesting of his power—his power!
God! how the stupid people miss the path
That winds past every garden gate to heaven.
His power! Oh, it is upon his mouth
And in his eyes—the touch—the way of him!
Supreme and tender miracle of man,
What do they, asking you for any sign?

BARTIMÆUS. Ay, you know Christ!

MARY. And of these foolish men,
Judas is first. Oh, what has blinded him
That he can miss the sun on Jesus' hair!

BARTIMÆUS. He pays the price strong men must pay on whom
The fretting business of the world depends.
Listen—a parable of four men, told
By Persian Magi: "When God made the world
Four angels watched him turn the star in space—
The first said: Give to me, O God, thy star!
The second: Tell me, God, how it was made!
The third: Why is there any world at all?
The fourth knelt to adore and went away
To make another like God's golden star."
These souls are known in human history:
The man of business, then the scientist,
The sage and poet. Judas is the first,
And we the last—only as men rise up
From holding and accounting for a star
To that pure worship of the beautiful
In holy art of giving like the Christ's,
Will they no longer clamour for a sign—
The sign will be the service of their love.

MARY. The way to Christ must be as you have said—
Past any need that holds one bound by love
Of builded things and faith in ancient law,
Customs and forms. A spirit must be free
To tread the upper air of day with him.

BARTIMÆUS. Ay, that is Christ, but men must travel far
Before they find the freedom of his feet.
Meanwhile, what now of Judas?

MARY. I have learned
That he, impatient of the Master's way,
Will force the issue with a company
Of swordmen from the garrison, this night
Here in the garden of Gethsemane!

BARTIMÆUS [*horror stricken, rises from the olive press and tries to find his way to the gate with his staff*].
Satan has entered his heart!

MARY [*overtaking him, guides him through the gate*].
Go, find
The Master—Judas must not do this thing—
I will wait for him at the gate.

[*She stands within the gate, watching Bartimæus, who disappears among the trees, tapping with his staff to find the way.*]

BARTIMÆUS. Master!

[*Mary shuts the gate and stands looking down the road at left, whence come the murmur of voices and the glimmer of torches.*]

MARY. They come!

[*She turns and calls after Bartimæus.*]
Oh, tell the Master that they come!
There is a gate within the western wall—
Tell him to go that way!

BARTIMÆUS [*from a distance*].

Master! Master!

[*Judas appears, followed at a distance by a band of soldiers and a company of priests, levites and men from Jerusalem. They move quietly and speak in subdued tones. At a sign from Judas they halt, while he draws near to Mary.*]

MARY [*standing before the closed gates, faces Judas*].

Judas, why are you here with all these men?

JUDAS [*sternly*].

Woman, aside!

MARY. I am the bolt that bars
You from an evil.

JUDAS. Woman, stand aside!

MARY. You shall not enter here.

JUDAS [*pointing to the distant company*].

Let these men pass!

MARY [*passionately*].

Now in the name of God, I stand!

JUDAS [*earnestly*].

Mary!

MARY. By every moment of our love, I swear
You shall not enter in!

JUDAS. And by the tears
Of Israel, I pray you stand aside!

MARY. If you but place your hand upon the gate,
My hand will pluck the love you planted here,
Up by the roots and throw it in your face!

JUDAS. Love, life, faith, hope, joy, you—all that I have
Are staked on this last venture of my soul.

MARY. Go through this gate and you have lost your soul!

JUDAS. You tax my patience—woman, stand aside—
Time and eternity are met to prove
The moment of my deed—if he be Christ,
Then ere the moon hides in that coming cloud
The angels will descend, the dead rise up,
To meet our Master. Mine alone the faith,
The love, to lift him forthwith on his throne!
So let these pass.

MARY [*stretching her arms along the gate*].
Love nails me to a cross
To guard his gate.

JUDAS [*to the captain of the band*].
Advance!

MARY [*as the soldiers move up, followed by the others*].
Master, they come—

[*Judas leaps forward and seizes her, placing his hand over her mouth, and draws her struggling body aside as the soldiers and the crowd rush through the gate. In the agony of her moment Mary swoons. Judas takes her to the olive press and lays her tenderly thereon.*]

JUDAS [*with tears*].

Oh, my bruised blossom out of Magdala!

[*He swiftly joins the company in the garden. For a while there is heard the sound of footsteps softened by the leaves, and the torches recede more and more among the trees until they twinkle like fireflies. The moonlight falls on Mary's pallid face and hair that hangs in the glory of its abundance over the ledge of the olive press. She stirs and slowly rising, looks vacantly about her. Her mind is once more affected by sorrow. She forgets that Judas has entered the garden to betray Jesus. Sitting on the ledge of the olive press she begins to arrange her hair, braiding it as she sings in a little, soft voice like that of a child.*]

MARY. Down in the west is the sun—
Day is done.
Come to the tamarask tree,
Love with me;
Or to the olive and vine,
Heart of mine.

Out of the night steals a star
Faint and far;
Soft from a field of the south,
To my mouth
Flutters a little, white dove,
Oh my Love!

[*She leaps lightly from the olive press to the road and wanders down to front, gathering the berries that hang abundantly on the bushes. The disciples return from the road at right. They are unaware of Mary, who now sits among the bushes with the berries in her lap, which she strings on a straw, using a thorn from an acacia bush for a needle.*]

THOMAS [*looking through the gate*].
A company of soldiers!

PHILIP [*joining him*].
In the garden?

THE LAME MAN. And Jesus prisoner!

PHILIP. We have no swords!

THOMAS. Simon had two, but what are they against
A cohort?

PHILIP. Hence, find Judas! I will go
Within the garden—gather all you can
That we may set him free!
[*Up the path of the garden Simon runs wildly toward the gate.*]
Lo, Simon comes.

SIMON [*sobbing*].
Woe! Woe!

PHILIP [*staying him as he reaches the gate*].
Simon!

SIMON. The beauty of the Lord
Is broken on a kiss!

PHILIP. Simon! Simon!
SIMON. Judas betrayed the Master with a kiss!
PHILIP. Judas—he who has loved the Master so?
SIMON. I smote a servant with my ready sword,
But Jesus bade me sheathe it at my side—
What can one do with such a Master?
MOCKING VOICES [*in the garden*].
Hail!
PHILIP [*as the torches begin to flash among the trees*].
Hither they come!
SIMON. Haste to Jerusalem!
MOCKING VOICES. All hail, King of the Jews!
THOMAS. Come, gather swords
In thousands from the people who adore.
PHILIP [*as they go out at right*].
The people? ay, the people who adore
And love the Master; they will rise forthwith—
A hurricane of flame upon the host!
[*They disappear—the Lame Man bravely following with laborious steps on crutches.*]
THE LAME MAN. Oh, that these crutches were a flank of spears
Levelled to save the Master from this thing!
[*He is lost among the trees.*]
VOICES [*with nearing sound of many feet*].
All hail, King of the Jews!
VOICE OF JUDAS [*in an agony of pleading*].
Now—now—the sign!
[*The soldiers appear with lifted torches and in*

their midst Jesus walks—his wrists manacled before him; as they advance and turn to the right, Judas in wild anxiety walks at the left flank of the company with imploring hands outstretched to Jesus].

JUDAS. O Master—Master—O my Master—now!

[*The crowd of mockers, jeering, behind the soldiers, with pointing hands at Jesus.*]

CROWD. He is a master!

Ay, a very King!

Hail, King of the Jews!

Where is your crown?

We'll make him one of thorns!

JUDAS [*as they near the bend of the road*].

Now lift your hand

And let these know Messias in their midst!

[*They begin to disappear among the trees—the torches' flare fading to a twinkling flame and the jeering voices dying down to a murmur of mockery.*]

VOICES. King of the Jews—King of the Jews—King of——

MARY [*sitting in the moonlight, looks up from counting her berries and listens to the fading voices from the wood, then with a little low, sad voice sings*].

There was a king
(Long, long ago)
With robe and ring,
(Long, long ago)

And when he smiled,
A little child
Put forth his hand
And gave command,
(Long, long ago).

[*As the lights are lost among the trees, she rises with a lace of red berries about her neck and goes towards the gate, where she stands looking in.*]

I like a garden, for they say that God
Plays with boy angels, as he used to do
When flowers grew in Eden long ago!

[*She stands within the gate, leaning her head against the right pillar and looking away toward left—the moon shines full on her face. Crazed by utter grief, Judas returns down the road, unloosing the girdle about his waist.*]

JUDAS. My God! My God; he would not speak to me—
And they will hang him high on Golgotha!

MARY [*softly singing*].

There was a King
(Long, long ago)
With robe and ring,
(Long, long ago)

JUDAS. O Master! Master! I will hang with you.

[*He leaps upon the olive press and climbs the*

tree behind it and is lost to view among its heavy foliage.]

MARY [*singing*].

And when he smiled,
A little child
Put forth his hand
And gave command
(Long, long ago).

[*With a breaking cry, Judas falls to the olive press, where he lies with outstretched, lifeless arms and upturned face. Mary, startled by the sound, turns and looks at the dead body. Slowly, with widening eyes, she approaches the press. She puts forth her hand and at the touch her reason is restored under the stress of emotion.*]

MARY [*with rush of tears and choking cries*].
Jesus!—Judas——!

[redacted]

Norwood, Robert Winkworth
The man of Kerioth

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